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THE STORY OF THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL

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BY

ELEANOR D. WOOD

WITH INTRODUCTION BY TOM BRYAN, M.A.

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BISHOPSGATE

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PREFACE

THE metrical version of Amos and Hosea was made by President Harper, of the University of Chicago. See "The Text of the Book of Amos" in the "Decennial Publications" of the University of Chicago, and the *Biblical World* for December, 1904. Almost all of the original text of Amos is reproduced in this study, but of Hosea only those parts that most clearly present his message.

The Isaiah material is arranged as nearly as possible chronologically, the sermons being put early or late according as they refer to historical events. The reasons for considering Ch. xl. to lv. as the work of a "Second Isaiah" are simply that the words as they stand do not foretell the career of Cyrus nor the conditions of the exile, but imply that they are well-known. The translation used is that of the Polychrome Bible wherever it is not the Revised Version except that the transliteration of the divine name JHVH and the name LORD is changed to Yahweh throughout. Where the translation of the Revised Version is used the arrangement as poetry follows quite closely that of Duhm.

The text of Micah and Zephaniah here reproduced is from G. A. Smith's " Book of the Twelve." Nahum and Habbakkuk belong to this period, but have been omitted because they deal with Nineveh rather than conditions in Judah.

The original form of the Book of Jeremiah is not yet fully determined. It is possible that it was partly at least in poetic form. The poetic passages given are the reconstruction of Duhm. See Duhm's " Handkommentar zum A. Testament."

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INTRODUCTION.

I ONCE heard Dr. Parker, in his own inimitable manner, say that only a woman or an angel could read the 23rd Psalm properly. He meant, of course, that the depth of tenderness and sympathy of the psalm has a charm and a strength which can be best discerned and interpreted for us by a woman's mind and voice. In a way this could be truly said of the Old Testament Prophets generally; for they were at heart, all of them, full of tenderness and of compassion. They could, and did, denounce injustice and sin passionately—even fiercely; but this was just because of their intense love of all human good, of their devotion to all causes right and just, and of their horror of all wrong as bringing in its train human grief.

We need to know the Old Testament prophets better. They had a message for their own age; but their message is equally true for us to-day. This book begins a new era in the Adult School method of studying the prophets. The second of our Adult School aims is "to study the Bible frankly, freely, reverently and without prejudice." This we have done and shall continue to do. But we have approached the prophets too much as a collection of texts and passages, rather than as the burning words of living men, dealing with human life, and character in its highest aspects and relations. We must study the books of the prophets as a whole and not in chapters; we must become more intimate with the men and with the conditions of life of that far off time when these books were written. And above all, we must learn to see as they saw, the character of God and of His dealings with men and nations.

Carlyle, discussing what he called the "condition-of-the-people question," once burst out with the passionate cry—"The beginning and the end of what is the matter with us is we have forgotten God." The God we have forgotten is the God of Amos, of Hosea, of Isaiah. His character is justice, says Amos, and he bids his people serve him by being prodigal of fair play—'let justice roll down as waters and righteousness as an ever-flowing stream.' His character, says Hosea, is Love, and the prophet reminds his hearers that 'it is Love God delights in and not sacrifice.' His character, says Isaiah, is Salvation: Jahweh saves; he heals, he binds up the broken-hearted, he sets at liberty the captive. Have confidence in him! Our social, industrial and political problems are old foes, only with new faces. The same problems were met by these old Hebrews, who were men intensely human, large hearted, far seeing, and who, moreover, were 'very sure of God.'

As students of the Bible we Adult School men and women are singularly fortunate in having Eleanor Wood to introduce us in this volume to these grand old prophets of God. Miss Wood brings to her work a mind well equipped for her task. Many of us in the Adult Schools have had the privilege and pleasure of sitting in her class-room and listening to her spoken words. To such this book will have an increased value, will possess an added charm. We shall now and again catch a glimpse of the teacher's manner, or a vision of her personality. We shall not merely be reading cold print; as our eyes run over the pages we shall often hear the living voice. And those who have not this great advantage may be assured that Miss Wood is a great lover and a devoted student of the Book she writes about—every line in this volume is a witness of that; and she is besides enthusiastic in her support of our Adult Schools.

I may perhaps be allowed to add a short note on the author's transliteration of the Hebrew name of the

Deity. Many in our Schools are familiar with the form Jehovah; Miss Wood renders this name Yahweh—a form not so well known to the general reader. But the change is made, we may be sure, for some very good reasons. The fact is that the pronunciation of the Hebrew name of God is a matter of conjecture. The name was very frequently on the lips of the prophets, but in later days it was endowed with great sanctity and was regarded as the ineffable name. To pronounce it was to incur the penalty of death. The word was written without the vowels—Y.H.W.H. (יהוה) or with the vowels of another word (Adonai; which means the mighty lord) added, and in reading, this latter word was uttered. In course of time it came about that the correct pronunciation of the name was forgotten. The form Jehovah is derived from a combination of the two names mentioned, and almost certainly does not give the true pronunciation of the word. It was transliterated into Greek by Ἰαβε, and this, together with considerations of contractions used, suggests the form Yahweh. It must be remembered that among the Hebrews a name meant much more than with us: with us a name is often no more than a postal address; to them it was an indication of character. What character the name Yahweh, as used by the prophets, conveyed, Miss Wood makes abundantly clear in the course of her story.

An interesting discussion of the names of the Deity will be found in Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible," and in the "Encyclopedia Biblica."

TOM BRYAN.

CHRONOLOGICAL CHART.

DATE B.C.	PROPHETS.	JUDAH.	ISRAEL.	SYRIA.	ASSYRIA AND EG
785			JEREBOAM II.		
788		UZZIAH (788-740)			
750					TIGLATH-PILESER III. (745-727)
	Amos.			Assyrian invasion of Syria and the West lands from 745	
743					
743			ZECHARIAH (739, reigned 6 months.) SHALLUM (reigned 1 month)		
740	Hosea.	"The year King UZZIAH died." Isaiah's vision			
740		JOTHAM.			
738			MENAHEM is trib	utary to Assyria	
737			PEKAHIAH		
736		AHAZ	PEKAH		
735		AHAZ is attacked	by PEKAH and	REZIN of Damasc	us.
733				Damascus besieged	and taken by Assyria (732).
732		AHAZ does homag	e to the King of A	ssyria at Damascus	
730			HOSHEA		
727		HEZEKIAH			SHALMANEZE IV.
	Isaiah.				
725			Assyria lays siege to Samaria		
722			Fall of Samaria; exile of the people of Israel		SARGON
720				Fall of Gaza	SARGON defe Egypt at Raphi
715			Samaria re-peopled by alien folk		
	Micah				
711				Ashdod besieged a	nd taken by Assyria
705					SENNACHERI

CHRONOLOGICAL CHART—(*Contd.*).

PROPHETS	JUDAH.	SYRIA.	ASSYRIA AND EGYPT.
Isaiah:	Judah invaded by Jerusalem besieged and	delivered. Retreat of	SENNACHERIB Assyrian army
Micah:	MANASSEH		
			SENNACHERIB murdered
			ESARHADDON, King of Assyria
	MANASSEH pays tribute	to Assyria	
		Tyre falls to	ESARHADDON Egypt invaded; fall of Memphis
			ASHURBANIPAL
	Judah and all the West la	nds subject to Assyria	
			ASHURBANIPAL captures Thebes
	AMON		
	JOSIAH		
Zephaniah.	Western Asia and Palest	ine invaded by Scythians	
			Medes attack Nineveh
	Book of the Law discove	red.	
	Josian Reformation (2 K	ings xxii.-xxiii.)	PHARAOH NECOH II.
	JOSIAH is slain at Megiddo. Judah subject to Egypt		
	JEHOAHAZ (reigns 3 m	onths; captive in Egypt).	
Nahum.			Fall of Nineveh
	JEHOIAKIM	Battle of Carchemish	PHARAOH NECOH defeated by Nebuchadrezzar
	NEBUCHADREZZAR f (often spelt Nebuchadnez Judah vassal of Babylon	ounds the world empire zar.)	of Babylon.
	Judah revolts, and is inv	aded by allies of Babylon	
	JEHOIACHIN; Jerusa First exile to Babylon	lem yields to NEBUCHA	DREZZAR
	ZEDEKIAH revolts at	instigation of Egypt	
	Jerusalem taken by NE Second exile to Babylon	BUCHADREZZAR	
Ezekiel.	The Babylonian Captivi	ty	
II. Isaiah.			CYRUS takes Babylon
Haggai.	Jews return to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Joshua		
Zechariah I.-VIII.			

Jeremiah.

AMOS, THE SHEPHERD AND PROPHET.

SECTION I.

AMOS'S HOME AND OCCUPATION.

In the wilderness of Tekoa there once lived a great man. In this wild region lying on the heights north-west of the Dead Sea, lived "Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa" (Amos i. 1), and who gave to the world a new idea of God.

There seems nothing in the rough, dreary hills of Judæa to make one great. Life for the shepherds of Tekoa must have been, as it is to-day, lonely and hard and dreary. As one looks to the east, the Dead Sea seems to lie in a great chasm at one's feet, its deep blue water contrasting strongly with the red hills of Moab. To the south and west and north stretches the desert, giving no sign of human life except a glimpse of the grey towers of Jerusalem.*

The wilderness of Tekoa.

These are the "only signal of the spirit, the one token that man has a history."†

Amos sometimes left his mountain home and went to the cities and mingled in the life of the people there,

Amos's connection with cities.

*However, a recent traveller reports that he could see, when at Tekoa, the town of Bethel on the north horizon.

† G. A. Smith, "The Book of the Twelve," p. 76.

and gradually came to feel that he had a message for them, but it was a message which he brought from the desert.

> " I am no prophet, nor am I a prophet's son ;
> But a shepherd am I, and a dresser of sycamores ;
> And* Yahweh took me from behind the sheep,
> And Yahweh said unto me :
> Go, prophesy unto my people, Israel."
> (Amos vii. 14, 15.)

With these words Amos defines his life work. They show that he was no ordinary prophet ; he was not a wandering seer of the fortune-telling type, who made his living by telling people where to find lost articles. It was not this trade which took Amos to the cities, he was a shepherd and went to market to sell wool.

Not a fortune-telling prophet.

What does he mean by calling himself a dresser of sycamores ? The sycamore tree grows abundantly in the lower and warmer parts of Palestine, near water. " It attains the size of a walnut tree, has wide-spreading branches, and, on account of its shade, is often planted by the wayside (Luke xix. 4). The fruit grows, not on the branches, but on little sprigs, rising directly out of the stem, and in clusters like the grape—it is something like a small fig in shape and size, but insipid and woody in taste." The word translated " dresser " of sycamores may mean " pincher " of the sycamore fruit, and may refer to the fact that the fruit is made to ripen by pinching or bruising it. At any rate, Amos seems to have considered it part of his business to raise sycamore fruit. But this fruit will not grow so high above the sea level as Tekoa is situated ; how then could Amos grow it ? He must have gone down to the lower land for this purpose. To-day the shepherds in that region cultivate the same fruit, and sometimes

A cultivator of sycamore fruit.

* For note on name " Yahweh " see Introduction by T. Bryan.

figs and apricots also, near the springs. A shepherd's life in the region of Tekoa would be a wandering life, because vegetation is so scarce. The sheep would need to be led over wide ranges in order to find food. Probably, at certain seasons, Amos led his sheep to the lowlands and looked after his sycamore trees. Sycamore growing was not, therefore, a separate business from sheep-raising, but naturally went along with it, as it does to this day in that region.

But it is not probable that Amos raised sycamore fruit enough to take to market. It was not considered very good fruit, and was eaten only by the poorer people. It must have been Amos' business as wool-grower that took him to the cities. Jerusalem and the cities farther north were his market. At least once a year he would go north to sell his wool, travelling perhaps from city to city, until he found the best market. Leaving Tekoa early in the morning, it would be possible to travel the twelve miles up to Jerusalem by noon, learn about the market, and go on ten miles farther to Bethel by night. The roads were rough, but the native shepherds would know how to travel them. The cities, then, belonged to the life of Amos as well as the desert, and the one city that he was most keenly interested in was Bethel.

Bethel one of Amos's markets.

Bethel was the chief religious and commercial centre in Southern Israel. Ever since the division of the kingdom it had possessed a high place, in which Yahweh was worshipped under the form of a calf. (Read 1 Kings xii. 27-33). Since other peoples worshipped their gods on high places with images, it gradually came about that the feast, and other features of worship of the Canaanites were adopted by the Israelites. In the earliest law-book, the Book of the Covenant (Ex. xx. 23, to xxiii. 19), which dates from about the time of Amos, three agricultural feasts are commanded to be kept by all Israelites. (Read Ex. xxiii. 14-17). These, of course, had not belonged to the Yahweh

Bethel a religious and commercial centre.

Canaanite elements had become a part of Yahweh worship.

worship, which had to do with desert life. Along with these feasts, etc., which the Israelites had borrowed from the Canaanites, they had also taken much of their immorality and unfair dealing. Bethel had become wealthy, too, during the general prosperity of recent years, and this made the temptation perhaps still greater to take up the luxurious life of the older inhabitants of the land. In Judæa it is probable, though there is little evidence on the point, that more of the original elements of Yahweh worship had been kept, at least by the country people. When Amos came north, he felt the contrast. The necessity grew upon him of delivering a message to these who were departing from the true Yahweh worship, and, at last, leaving his sheep, he came.

Amos's time was a period of great prosperity.

The work of Amos undoubtedly belongs to the reign of Jeroboam II., king of Israel (785-739). It was a period of great prosperity and belief in the coming supremacy of Israel. Jeroboam had already greatly increased the territory of Israel. (Read 2 Kings xiv. 23-29.)

SECTION II.

THE FIRST SERMON AT BETHEL

It was a feast-day in Bethel, and all the people who had fine clothes and who could bring rich presents were gathered at the temple. In the midst of their gaiety they are astonished to hear a deep, stern voice rising above the din of the crowd. What is it the voice is saying ?

Introduction.

" Yahweh roars from Zion,
And utters his voice from Jerusalem,

The pastures of the shepherds mourn,
And the top of Carmel withers." (Amos i. 2.)

Who is it that dares to speak in the name of Yahweh? And why should the voice be one of warning? One glance at the speaker tells that he is a man from the desert. At least it will be interesting to know what more he has to say, and, as they stop to listen, the voice is distinctly heard:

Judgment upon Damascus.

"Thus has Yahweh said:
For three transgressions of Damascus,
Yea, for four, I will not revoke it;
Because they have threshed with threshing instruments of iron
Gilead." (Amos i. 3.)

Ah, the warning, then, was for Damascus. Of course, Damascus must beware of the coming of Yahweh and his people. Why should they not, indeed, for had not Jeroboam the king, already taken away part of the territory belonging to the city of Damascus? Had he not also taken Hamath far to the north, the most important mountain pass, one of the roads to the east? (Read 2 Kings xiv. 25, 28). Surely this man of the desert must be speaking the true oracles of Yahweh. And as the people gathered round they rejoiced to hear that the palaces of Ben-hadad, the King of Damascus and Syria, should be destroyed, and the people carried away into capitvity. It will surely be the will of Yahweh that Israel should be no more troubled with the presence of the power of Syria on the north; it surely will be the will of Yahweh that they shall no longer have the chance of showing such terrible cruelty in warfare as they had shown to the people of Gilead, who lived just south of them.

As the speaker proceeds, all are interested.

Judgment upon Philistia.

" Thus has Yahweh said :
For three transgressions of Gaza,
Yea, for four, I will not revoke it ;
Because they carried into complete captivity,
To deliver them up to Edom."

" And I will send a fire in the wall of Gaza,
And it shall devour her palaces ;
And I will turn my hand against Ekron ;

" And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod,
And the sceptre-holder from Askelon,
And the remnant of the Philistines shall perish."
(Amos i. 6-8.)

Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod, Askelon and one other, Gath, were the chief cities of the Philistines, who were ancient enemies of Israel, and enemies who had been able to hold their own. Ekron lay only a short journey to the west of Bethel, and their people would often meet. The Philistines were slave-dealers, but they surpassed in unkindness even the old desert Arabs in the way they carried on their trade. When the Arabs raided another tribe and captured people to sell as slaves, they always made it a rule to leave a few to perpetuate the name of the tribe and to worship the god of that tribe. But the Philistines fell below even this desert standard. Therefore cried the desert preacher,

" The remnant of the Philistines shall perish."

And none of his listeners were sorry to hear of the doom of their neighbours.

Again the speaker passes on to another country :

Judgment upon Ammon.

" Thus has Yahweh said :
For three transgressions of the children of Ammon,

Yea, for four, I will not revoke it ;
Because they have cruelly slain the mothers of Gilead
In order that they might enlarge their borders.

" But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah,
And it shall devour her palaces,
With shouting in the day of battle,

" And their king shall go into exile,
He and his princes together ;
Yahweh has said." (Amos i. 13-15.)

The Ammonites on the east of the Jordan were relatives, but ancient enemies, of the Israelites. Their one important city, Rabbah, was almost directly east of Bethel, but out on the edge of the desert. Gilead seems to have suffered from her neighbours on every side. The Syrians had threshed her with instruments of iron, and the Ammonites killed even her defenceless women for no other reason than that they might enlarge the borders of their territory. This was cruelty which surpassed the ordinary rules of warfare, and for this the Ammonites shall go into exile, cried the desert preacher, and his listeners could well believe it.

Judgment upon Moab.

" Thus has Yahweh said :
For three transgressions of Moab,
Yea, for four, I will not revoke it ;
Because they burned the bones of the King of Edom,
To desecrate the dead because of violence to Moab.

" But I will send a fire in Moab,
And it shall devour the palaces of Keryyoth,
With shouting, with the sound of trumpet.

" And I will cut off the judge from the midst of her,
And all her princes I will slay along with him ;
Yahweh has said." (Amos ii. 1-3).

In avenging themselves for some terrible deed, the warriors of Moab had not only killed the King of Edom, but also burned his body. But even the roughest of the desert Arabs would not desecrate the bodies of the people they had killed, and all the listeners at the feast would be moved with indignation as the preacher spoke of this impious deed, and they would be glad to hear that destruction should come upon those who would violate such a well-known principle.

Judgment upon Israel.

" Thus has Yahweh said :
For three transgressions of Israel,
Yea, for four, I will not revoke it ;
Because they sell the righteous for money,
And the needy for a pair of shoes.

" And because garments taken in pledge they spread out
Beside every altar,
And the wine of such as have been fined they drink,
In the houses of their gods.

" Who crush the head of the poor,
And the way of the humble they turn aside,
And a man and his judge deal according to agreement,
And so profane my holy name." (Amos ii. 6-8.)

It was with consternation that the listeners heard the preacher speak of the transgressions of Israel and declare that this mysterious " it " should also not be turned away from them. Surely, thought they, doom for her neighbours meant expansion for Israel. It had been years since they had committed any of

the cruelties like those of their less favoured neighbours. Israel had become a civilized nation; only success could lie before her. To be sure, they sold righteous and poor men into slavery when they could not pay their debts, even though it were only a debt for a pair of sandals; but did not the judges allow it?* To be sure, the garments that some had at the feast and the wine they were drinking that day had been taken from others who had been fined, but had they not been legally fined? Ah, but this preacher attacks the very judges of Israel, declaring that they do not give the poor man a fair chance. They even agree with the rich man before a case is tried, as to how it shall be decided. And all this the preacher thinks just as bad as the savage cruelties of Israel's neighbours. This injustice and unkindness to one another is profaning the name of Yahweh!

Perhaps his audience would have left him at this point if the preacher had not turned to a theme that they all loved—the story of the early days, when Yahweh led his people and gave them marvellous victories.

In the early days Yahweh led Israel in marvellous ways.

"And yet it was I who brought you up from the land of Egypt,
And led you in the wilderness forty years,
[And brought you hither] to possess the land of the Amorite.†

"And it was I who destroyed from before them the Amorites,
Whose height was like that of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks;

* It is probable that the "Book of the Covenant" (Ex. xx. 22 to xxiii. 19) was written about this time. Amos does not directly refer to any written law. However, it is interesting to notice Ex. xxii. 8 and xxiii. 6-8.

† Amos uses the name Amorite in place of Canaanite for the early inhabitants of Palestine.

But I destroy his fruit from above and his roots from beneath." (Amos ii. 9, 10.)

How often everyone had heard those fine old stories of the delivery from Egypt by the hand of Moses, of the special leading of Yahweh in the wilderness, of the giants, as big and strong as the trees of the forest, who were overcome by the help of Yahweh!

But the people have rejected the ancient religion of Yahweh.

"Moreover, I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your youths for Nazarites;
But ye made the Nazarites drink wine, and upon the prophets ye laid prohibition.
Is it not indeed so, O, children of Israel? It is the oracle of Yahweh." (Amos ii. 11, 12.)

But Israel had shown that they did not value all this that Yahweh had done, for they had told the prophets of Yahweh not to prophesy, and had made the Nazarites drink wine. These Nazarites represented old-fashioned religion. They let their hair grow long and refused to drink wine because they did not think that true worshippers of Yahweh should take up the luxurious way of life of their Canaanite neighbours. They thought that they ought to keep to the more simple, austere life, such as they lived in the desert with Yahweh in the early days. These old-fashioned Nazarites and prophets did not believe in the civilization of which the people of Bethel were so proud.

Now at last the people at the feast saw clearly what was the message of this desert preacher who had interrupted their festivities. He did not approve of their feast at all, nor of their temple, nor their fine ways of worshipping. He was only an old-time preacher after all. The people turned to their festivities again, but with words of warning ringing in their ears.

" Therefore, behold, it is I,
Who will make you groan in your places,
Just as the threshing-wagon makes groan,
(The floor) filled with sheaves.

Therefore calamity is coming, which cannot be escaped.

" Then shall refuge fail the swift,
And the strong shall not strengthen his force,
And the warrior shall not deliver himself,
And he that handles the bow shall not stand.

" And the swift of foot shall not rescue himself,
And the stoutest of heart among the warriors ;
And the skilled shall not deliver himself,
And he that rideth a horse shall flee away in that day." (Amos ii. 13-16.)

SECTION III.

THE ORIGIN OF AMOS'S MESSAGE.

" Hear this word which Yahweh has spoken against you, O, house of Israel,
Against the whole family that I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,
Only you have I known of all the families of the ground,
Therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities."
(Amos iii. 1-2.)

A new principle of religion —opportunity brings responsibility.

Amos had introduced himself to the people in a skilful manner, but with a most serious purpose, and he takes his next opportunity, perhaps the next day of

the feast, to deal directly with his message. In the opening words of this sermon he strikes at one of the principal religious ideas of the people. They all thought; Yahweh has specially cared for Israel in the past, therefore he will surely give us success in the future. But Amos said, If Yahweh has treated you differently, you should be different! And here you are worshipping just like the other nations, and as if Yahweh were like their gods. The special advantage you have had in knowing Yahweh ought to have made you better than other people; since it has not, punishment must come.

So certain is Amos of his message that he speaks in the name of Yahweh—as the mouthpiece of Yahweh. But it is his whole being—body, mind and spirit—that is Yahweh's mouth-piece! By what right does Amos speak in the name of the God of Israel? This question he answers before proceeding further.

Amos discovers the law of cause and effect.

"Can two walk together except they have made
an appointment?
Does a lion roar in the jungle when there is no prey
for him?
Does a young lion give forth his voice from his den
if he has not taken anything?
Does a bird fall upon the ground if there is no trap
for it?
Does a trap fly up from the ground unless it is
catching something?
If a trumpet is blown in a city, do the people not
tremble?
If any evil happens in a city, has not Yahweh done
it?

"For the Lord Yahweh does nothing
Except he reveal his purpose to his servants the
prophets.

"The lion hath roared; who is there that does not fear?
The Lord Yahweh has spoken; who is it that cannot prophesy?" (Amos iii. 3-8.)

Yahweh speaks to people. Why do they not listen?

Two things then make Amos sure of his message: (1) the facts that he sees; (2) the voice within him. The way in which he sets this forth makes it certain that his message took shape while he was in the desert. From the common things that he sees in the desert he has discovered a principle; indeed, he regards it as a fixed law—the law of cause and effect. He had often heard the lion roar and knew that this was a sign that it was leaping upon its prey. He had often seen the nets which were put out to catch birds suddenly fly up from the ground, and he knew that this meant that a bird had been caught. If he saw two people walking together across the desert, he knew that they must have met by appointment. If he heard the trumpet blown in a town, he knew the people were trembling with fright. And along with these observations gathered from his everyday life, Amos puts a more startling statement—if you see a calamity coming, you can be sure Yahweh is bringing it! Moreover, you can also be sure that he is bringing it for a purpose, and that he will reveal this purpose to his true prophets.

Assyria the power that will punish Israel.

Now what are the facts from which Amos draws the conclusion that destruction is coming upon Israel? One fact was the coming of the great Assyrian power. Another set of facts was the social and religious conditions in Israel. He understood the political situation of his time better than most people. He saw that Assyria was steadily moving toward the destruction of all the small states in Palestine and that there was nothing in the inner life of Israel to keep her from the same fate. The coming of Assyria was the roar of the lion; it was the calamity which Yahweh was bringing. But the fact of Assyria would

not have convinced Amos that Israel must fall had it not confirmed the conviction of his heart. He felt perfectly sure that a people that lived such unjust lives could not be allowed to live on by a just God. Yahweh was just, but his own people did not know it. Their lives and their worship had become immoral like that of their neighbours.

How it was that Amos felt so much more keenly than anyone else of his time that Yahweh was above all else a God of Justice and Righteousness, it is impossible fully to explain. It seems to have been a conception which rose out of his inner life. As he thought of Yahweh, of his dealing with his people in the past, of how he must regard their present life; as he looked upon nature and saw how all things moved by changeless law, he "saw" (i. 1) that Yahweh is justice, and that he must punish injustice. It was this conviction, primarily, which gave him his message to Israel. It was this truth which makes his message valuable for every age. In searching out the ways of Yahweh, the God of Israel, Amos came upon one of the attributes of the universal God, and he, therefore, took the first great step toward declaring the One God, and he made it certain that Yahweh rather than any other god of ancient times, should be, in future, identified with the One True God.

The lion had roared, and Yahweh had shown his purpose to Amos; why, then, should he not prophesy? It is, therefore, with the greatest boldness that he proclaims the doom of Israel. Calling to the people of Philistia and Egypt to gather upon the hills around Israel, he pictures how they shall see Israel surrounded by enemies and plundered because "they know not to do good."

The doom of Israel.

"Proclaim over the palaces in Ashdod, and over the palaces in the land of Egypt:
Gather ye upon the mountain of Samaria, and see the manifold tumults therein;

And how they know not to do good, it is the oracle of Yahweh.
These who treasure violence and oppression in their palaces.

" Therefore, thus has the Lord Yahweh said: An adversary shall surround the land,
And he shall strip from thee thy strength, and thy palaces shall be plundered;
And I will smite the winter house together with the summer house,
And the houses of ivory shall perish, yea, many houses shall cease.

" Thus has Yahweh said: As the shepherd rescues,
From the mouth of the lion, two legs or a piece of an ear,
So the children of Israel shall be rescued, they who dwell in Samaria,
In the corner of a couch, in the damask of a divan.

" Hear ye and testify against the house of Jacob,
That in the day when I visit the transgressions of Irsael upon him,
I will inflict punishment upon the altars of Bethel,
And the horns of the altar shall be cut off and fall to the ground." (Amos iii. 9-14).

As Amos uttered these words he may have pointed to the altar of Bethel which was there in the sight of all. His words, of course, meant that the whole city would be destroyed with its luxurious palaces, which represented the oppression of some of the people. Bethel, too, was the dwelling place of the king, and the altar at Bethel was the king's sanctuary (vii. 13); therefore Amos was declaring the downfall of the royal house. His words were so understood by his

listeners, and reported to the priest and king (vii. 10, 11). The figure of the shepherd who is able to take only "two shin-bones and a bit of an ear" from the mouth of the lion who has taken one of the sheep from his flock, is surely a bit of actual experience from Amos's shepherd life. And the gruesome picture must have made the people shudder. But Amos was not gentle, as is shown by his next words concerning the women of Israel. He calls them cattle, and describes how they will be led forth through the breaches in the walls with fish-hooks in their noses. They have injured the poor, and have encouraged their husbands in their false, luxurious life.

Condemnation of the women.

"Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan,*
Who [dwell] in the mountain of Samaria,
Who injure the poor, and crush the needy,
Who say to their husbands, Bring, that we may drink.

"The Lord Yahweh has sworn by his holiness:
Behold days are coming upon you,
And ye shall be taken with hooks, even the last of you with fish-hooks,
And through breaches ye shall go forth, and ye shall be cast toward Harmon."† (Amos iv. 1-3).

* Bashan (a region to the north-east across the Jordan) was noted for its "fat and ferocious" cattle.

† This place is unknown.

SECTION IV.

A TAUNT SONG, SHOWING ISRAEL'S FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND YAHWEH.

"Go ye to Bethel and transgress,
In Gilgal increase transgression,
And bring every morning your sacrifices,
Every third day your tithes.

"And burn of leavened bread a thank-offering,
And proclaim free-will offerings, make them known,
For so ye love to do, O children of Israel;
It is the oracle of the Lord Yahweh."
(Amos iv. 4-5.)

Such scorn had Amos for all their worship that he naturally expresses it in this mocking song. He exaggerates their religious zeal. Of course, no one brought sacrifices every morning, nor paid tithes every third day. But even if they did, it would only make their sins greater. Yahweh does not care for sacrifices and tithes; he wishes only that the people shall return to him. The rest of the song shows how Yahweh has long been dealing with Israel, trying to persuade them to return to him. He has sent various calamities which ought to have been a warning that he was displeased with them and might destroy them.

Yahweh has warned his people by means of calamities.

"I also it was who gave to you
Cleanness of teeth in all your cities,
And lack of bread in all your places,
But ye did not return to me; it is the oracle of Yahweh.

Famine.

Drought.

"I also it was who withheld from you the rain,
And I sent rain on one city,
While upon another city I sent not rain;
But ye did not return unto me; it is the oracle of Yahweh.

Blight and locust.

"I smote you with blight and decay,
I laid waste your gardens and vineyards;
Your fig-trees and olive-trees the locusts devoured;
But ye did not return unto me; it is the oracle of Yahweh.

Pestilence and war.

"I sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt;
I slew your young men with the sword;
And I caused the stench of your camps to rise in your nostrils;
But ye did not return unto me; it is the oracle of Yahweh.

Earthquake.

"I overthrew among you . . .
As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah;
And ye were as a brand snatched from the blaze;
But ye did not return to me; it is the oracle of Yahweh.

Something more terrible coming.

"Therefore thus will I do to thee, O Israel,
Yahweh, God of hosts, is his name;
Because I do this to thee,
Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.

Yahweh has created and controls nature.

"For, lo! he forms the mountains and creates the wind,
And he tells man what is his thought;
He makes dawn darkness,
And treads upon the heights of the earth."

(Amos iv. 6-13).

This song shows that Amos did not think that Yahweh's decision to destroy Israel was a sudden one. He had long been trying to win them back to himself. Amos, too, had not suddenly reached the conclusion that Yahweh intended to destroy Israel. Probably he had himself lived through some of the calamities of which he speaks. Proof of this is given in a later passage, which will, for that reason, be given here.

" Thus the Lord Yahweh showed me,
And lo! [Yahweh] was forming locusts, Locusts.
In the beginning of the coming up of the after-growth;
And when they were making an end
Of devouring the herb of the land,
Then I said, O Lord Yahweh, forgive, I pray thee,
How can Jacob stand, for he is small?
Yahweh repented him concerning this,
It shall not be, said Yahweh.

" Thus the Lord Yahweh showed me,
And lo! he was calling to contend, Drought caused by hot winds.
By fire—the Lord Yahweh.
And it devoured the great deep,
And had begun to devour the land;
And I said, O Lord Yahweh, cease, I pray thee.
How can Jacob stand, for he is small?
Yahweh repented him concerning this,
Neither shall this be, said Yahweh.

" Thus [the Lord] showed me, Yahweh tests Israel and finds her wanting.
And lo! the Lord was stationed
Beside a wall, with a plumb-line in his hand.
And the Lord said: 'Behold I am setting a plumb-line,
In the midst of my people Israel,
I will not again pass by them any more.
And the high-places of Isaac shall be laid waste,
I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." (Amos vii. 1-9).

Amos has prayed for Israel.

So Amos himself had passed through at least the plague of locusts and the drought, and he tells us how he felt in the midst of those trying times. He thought perhaps the end had come and he prayed for Israel. The words he uses—

> "Forgive, I pray thee,
> How can Jacob stand, for he is small!"

show more love and tenderness than Amos expresses elsewhere, but they show that underneath his apparent harshness there was deep love and concern for Israel. He had loved and hoped and prayed for Israel, and only after long waiting for them to return to Yahweh, saw that their end was at hand.

During all this period did Amos do nothing to help to bring Israel back to Yahweh? It is certainly hard to believe that he did not, but unfortunately he does not tell us. Perhaps the figure of the plumb-line indicates some kind of a reform which Israel refused to take up. At any rate, Amos feels that Yahweh had been not only just but merciful, and that now the time has come when he "will not again pass by them any more."

SECTION V.

ISRAEL'S FUNERAL SONG.

"Hear this word
Which I take against you,
Even a dirge, O house of Israel;
For thus has said the Lord Yahweh;

"She shall fall not to rise again,
The virgin Israel;

She shall be hurled down upon her own soil,
With none to raise her up,—

"The city that goes forth a thousand
Having but a hundred left;
And she that goeth forth a hundred of the house
of Israel
Having but ten left.

"For thus said Yahweh
To the house of Israel,
Seek me and live,
But to Beersheba * ye shall not cross over.

"And do not seek Bethel,
And Gilgal ye shall not enter,
For Gilgal shall surely go into exile,
And Bethel shall become [Beth]-aven.†

"[And now, O house of Israel]
Seek Yahweh and live,
Lest he cast fire on Joseph's house
And there be none to quench it for Bethel."

His name is Yahweh,
He is the creator of the Pleiades and Orion;
He turns the murk into morning,
And day into night darkens;
He calls for the waters of the sea,
And pours them out on the face of the earth;
He it is who flashes out ruin on the strong,
And brings destruction on the fortified.

(Amos v. 1-9).

* Beersheba was a religious centre in Judah. They had to cross over the border of Israel to go there.

† Beth=*house*; el=*God*; aven=*naught*. Gilgal was a centre for worship.

It must have been with consternation that the people heard Amos chanting the dreary melody of their funeral songs. At every funeral, either hired singers or others mingled this monotonous droning with the grief of the mourners. When, therefore, Amos pictures Israel as a virgin whose death he is mourning, it must have made the possibility of such a catastrophe seem very real. He does not extend the figure, but passes at once to the description of the desolation of the country. The song contains one of the three places in Amos in which he speaks as if there were still some hope that Israel might repent and be saved—"Seek Yahweh and live"— and ends with a magnificent description of how Yahweh controls nature.

This funeral song is followed by a poem of a different character, which recounts the sins that cause the coming death, and ends with a return to the picture of the nation in mourning, when "in all streets they shall say Woe! Woe!"

Fine houses, built by oppressing the meek, will not stand.

"They who turn judgment to wormwood,
And cast righteousness to the ground,
Who hate him who reproveth in the gate,
And one who speaks uprightly they abhor,—
Therefore, because ye trample upon the meek,
And take from him exactions of grain,
Houses of hewn stone ye have built,
But ye shall not dwell in them;
Vineyards of delight ye have planted,
But ye shall not drink their wine.

Takers of bribes and persecutors rule the time; prudent people are keeping still.

"Surely I know that many are your transgressions,
And great are your sins;
Persecutors of the righteous, takers of bribes!
Yea, the needy in the gate they thrust aside.
Therefore, since the prudent man at such a time is keeping silence

It is surely an evil time.
Seek good and not evil,
That ye may live;
That so may be Yahweh, God of hosts,
With you, as ye have said.

"Hate evil and love good
And establish justice in the gate;
Perhaps Yahweh may be gracious,
The God of hosts, to a remnant of Joseph.
Therefore thus has Yahweh said,
I will cause shouting in all squares for mourning.
And in all streets they shall say, Woe! Woe!
And the husbandman shall summon to mourning,
Yea in all vineyards there shall be mourning,
When I pass through the midst of thee, has Yahweh said." (Amos v. 7-17).

If good instead of evil might rule, Yahweh might stay the calamity.

SECTION VI.

THE DAY OF YAHWEH.

"Alas for those who long for the day of Yahweh;
It is darkness, and not light.
As when one flees from a lion, and a bear meets him,
Or goes into the house, and leans his hand upon the wall, and a serpent bites him.
Shall not Yahweh's day be darkness and not light?
Yea, deep darkness without any brightness in it."
(Amos v. 18-20).

Amos attacks the popular theory of the "Day of Yahweh."

Here Amos brings into view some of the popular theology of his time. The "Day of Yahweh" was looked forward to as the golden age, when Israel should be supreme and successful in all things. But Amos

declared that this is a false dream. Yahweh's Day will be a time of punishment which none can escape. If they try to flee it will be like running away from a lion only to meet a bear, or if one should succeed in getting into the house, it would be only to be bitten by a serpent as one leaned his hand against the wall.

Of course the reason that the "Day of Yahweh" is to be "darkness and not light" is that the people's way of living produces darkness, and Amos at this point gives his strongest denunciation of Israel's way of worship. Speaking in the name of Yahweh, he declares:

"I hate, I despise your feasts,
And I will not smell in your festivals,
For, although ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them.
Take away from me the noise of thy songs and the melody of thy lyres;
And let justice roll as waters,
And righteousness as an overflowing stream.

Israel's worship displeasing to Yahweh.

"Did ye bring me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness
During forty years, O house of Israel?
But now ye lift up the shrine of your king,
And the image of your God which ye have made for yourselves;
And so I will carry you into exile beyond Damascus,
Has said Yahweh, God of hosts is his name."
(Amos v. 21-27.)

The reference to the "image of your God" is a doubtful reference to the golden calf. No one knows how to translate this passage. If this does not refer to the golden calf, then Amos entered no protest against it, and even if it does, the fact still remains that he did not specially point out images as more

displeasing to Yahweh than other parts of their worship. Amos does not see the absurdity of images. He lays more emphasis upon the uselessness of their feasts and sacrifices.

What does he mean by asking whether they offered sacrifices in the wilderness? The question certainly expects the answer, No. Of course, the question gives definite evidence against the idea that the people to whom he was speaking knew our Pentateuch, with its many regulations concerning sacrifice said to have been given by Moses in the wilderness. Amos never appeals to written law, never accuses the people of having broken law. But were there no sacrifices in the wilderness? All early Semitic peoples held sacred sacrificial feasts, and would not the Israelites, too? Exodus xviii. gives an account of a sacred sacrificial feast. Perhaps this chapter gives the key to the solution of the difficulty. The Canaanite feasts were not like the old sacred feasts to Yahweh. The different kinds of offerings taken up to the temple at Bethel were not like the killing of an animal for a sacred feast, where everyone ate in order to have a common life with Yahweh. It was the Canaanite feast and the Canaanite way of bringing offerings that Amos said had never been in the wilderness. Immorality and oppression of various kinds were connected with these feasts. Therefore the noise of their lyres is offensive to Yahweh, who desires only that they shall

Did Israel sacrifice in the wilderness?

"Let justice roll as waters,
And righteousness as an ever-flowing stream."

Does Amos here put forth the ideal of a purely spiritual religion? Does he mean to sweep away all forms of worship? This question cannot be fully answered because Amos does not fully express himself. He certainly says that all the forms of worship which they are using at Bethel are displeasing to Yahweh,

Would Amos have no form of worship?

and are to be swept away. He certainly says justice and righteousness are the supreme things Yahweh wants, but he is dealing with a falling state, and he does not say what ways of worship a regenerated Israel might have. He speaks as if justice between man and man and communion with Yahweh were the sum of religion. One can only say without direct evidence that he would probably have kept some of the simpler ways of worshipping Yahweh that were kept by the people of the desert.

Woe to the princes who prey upon Israel.

" Alas for those who are careless in Zion,
And reckless in the Mount of Samaria,
Who specify themselves the chief of the nations,
And make a prey for themselves of the house of Israel,
Who postpone the day of calamity,
And cause the seat of violence to draw near.

Woe to those who give their lives to luxury.

" Who lie on ivory couches,
And stretch themselves out upon their divans,
And eat lambs out of the flock,
And calves from the midst of the stall;
Who twitter to the sound of the harp,
Like David, they devise for themselves instruments of song.

Woe to those who do not grieve for the troubles of Israel.

" Who drink from bowls of wine,
And with the first of oils they anoint themselves,
And do not grieve for the breach of Joseph.
Therefore, now, they shall go into exile at the head of the captives,
And the shout of the banqueters shall cease;
It is the oracle of Yahweh, God of hosts."
(Amos vi. 1-7.)

This description of the lazy luxury of Israel which does not concern itself with the " breach of Joseph," naturally leads to a statement of the breach that is surely coming.

"The Lord Yahweh has sworn by himself:
I abhor the glory of Jacob,
And his palaces I hate,
And I will deliver up the city and its contents;
And one shall smite the great house into fragments,
And the small house into fissures.

What Israel glories in, Yahweh must destroy.

"Do horses run upon crags?
Does one plough the sea with oxen?
That ye have turned justice into poison,
And the fruit of righteousness into wormwood.
Who rejoice in that which is not,
Who say: Have we not taken for ourselves horns
by our own strength?

Punishment is coming by the law of cause and effect.

Yea, behold I am raising up against you,
O house of Israel, a nation;
And they shall crush you,
From the entrance to Hamath
Unto the stream of the Arabah;
It is the oracle of Yahweh, God of Hosts."
(Amos vi. 8-14.)

From the north to the south Israel will be crushed by Assyria.

SECTION VII.

PRIEST AND PROPHET FACE TO FACE.

" Then sent Amaziah, the priest of Bethel,
To Jeroboam, the King of Israel, saying:
Amos has conspired against thee
In the midst of the house of Israel;
The land is not able
To contain all his words.

" For thus has Amos said:
Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
And Israel shall surely go captive from his land.

" And Amaziah said unto Amos:
O thou seer! Go flee thee to the land of Judah;
And eat bread there and prophesy there.
But at Bethel thou shalt no longer prophesy;
For it is the king's sanctuary,
And it is the royal residence.

" And Amos answered and said to Amaziah;
I am no prophet, nor am I a prophet's son;
But a shepherd am I, and a dresser of sycamores;
And Yahweh took me from behind the sheep,
And Yahweh said unto me:
Go, prophesy against my people, Israel.

" Now, therefore, hear the word of Yahweh:
Thou sayest, Thou shalt not prophesy against Israel,
Nor preach against the house of Isaac.

" Therefore, thus has Yahweh said :
Thy wife shall be a harlot in the city,
And thy sons and daughters shall fall by the sword ;
And thy land shall be divided by line,
And thou shalt die upon an unclean soil ;
And Israel shall surely go captive from his land."
(Amos vii. 10-17.)

This is one of the strongest scenes in the Old Testament. It is an epitome of much of history ; the man with no other credential than a vision of God and its meaning for his time, stands face to face with a representative of the priestly order, behind whom stands the political power. Priest and king conquer for the time being, but not for the time to come. Amos was sent home, but there he wrote his book, which began a new epoch in the history of Israel. He had proclaimed a view of God which could never die, and had been himself a type of prophet which gave a new definition to the word for all time to come.

Amos gave a new definition of prophecy.

Probably it is not true to say that Amos proclaimed absolute monotheism, for he does not deny the existence of other gods, but it is true to say that he proclaimed the absolute supremacy of Yahweh, and, what is far more important, he attributed to him a great moral quality—justice—which after-ages would see belonged to the universal God.

Amos not an absolute monotheist, but proclaimed the absolute supremacy and justice of Yahweh.

It is with some sadness that one reads the closing sections of the book, where Amos describes the coming punishment of Israel which Yahweh must inflict with relentless hand. But one must remember that the terrible death of Israel was to give life to Justice and that it accomplished its purpose.

" Thus the Lord Yahweh showed me,
And lo ! a basket of summer fruit !

. . . .

And Yahweh said to me,
The end has come unto my people Israel,
I will not again pass by them.

" Hear this, O ye that tread upon the needy,
And are for making the poor of the earth to cease,
saying :
When will the new moon pass that we may sell grain,
And the Sabbath that we may offer corn ?
Diminishing the ephah and enlarging the shekel,
And perverting balances of deceit.

" Yahweh hath sworn by the glory of Jacob :
I will never forget all their deeds.
On this account shall not the earth tremble
And every inhabitant in her mourn ?
And shall not the whole of it rise like the Nile ?
And sink like the Nile of Egypt ?

" And it shall come to pass in that day,
That I will cause the sun to set at noon,
And I will darken the earth in the clear day,
And the singing women of the palace shall wail,
It is the oracle of the Lord Yahweh : A multitude of
carcasses !
In every place they are cast.

" And I will turn your pilgrimages into mourning,
And all your songs into dirges,
And I will bring sackcloth upon all loins,
And upon every head baldness,
And I will make it like the mourning for an only
son,
And the end of it like a bitter day.

" And I will send a famine in the land,
Not a famine for bread, nor a thirst for water,
But for hearing the word of Yahweh,
And they shall wander from sea to sea,
And from the north even to the rising of the sun
they shall run to and fro,
To seek the word of Yahweh, but they shall not
find it.

" In that day there shall faint
The fairest maidens and the youths,
Who swear by Samaria's guilt,
And say: As liveth thy God, O Dan;
And: As liveth the way of Beersheba;
And they shall fall and not rise again.

" I saw the Lord standing by the altar,
And he said: Smite the capitals, that the thresholds
may shake,
Yea, break them off upon the head of all of them (?)
And the residue of them I shall slay with the sword.
There shall not escape of them a fugitive,
And there shall not be delivered of them a refugee.

" If they dig through to Sheol,
Thence will my hand take them;
And if they climb up to heaven,
Thence will I bring them down;
And if they conceal themselves at the top of Carmel,
Thence will I search them out and take them.

" And if they hide from before mine eyes at the
bottom of the sea,
Thence will I command the serpent and it will bite
them;

And if they go about in captivity before their enemies,
Thence will I command the sword and it will slay them;
And I will put mine eye on them
For evil and not for good.

"Are ye not as the sons of the Cushites unto me,
O sons of Israel? It is the oracle of Yahweh.
Did I not bring up Israel out of the land of Egypt,
And the Philistines from Caphtor, and Aram from Kir?
Behold the eyes of the Lord Yahweh are upon this sinful kingdom
And I will destroy it from off the face of the earth."

(Amos viii. 1—ix. 8.)

HOSEA.

SECTION I.

HOSEA'S LIFE AND ITS MEANING.

HOSEA was a man with a sorrow—a man who won from his sorrow a new vision of God. Of his life we know nothing except this sorrow and its interpretation. What could it mean that the wife whom he had loved with purity and truth had proved false to him? This was the problem with which he was forced to wrestle. This was the terrible situation in which the word of Yahweh came to him. Light dawned in the midst of his suffering when he saw that even as he loved and longed for the return of the one who had gone astray, so Yahweh loved Israel.

Hosea's life tragedy.

How completely he felt that the trouble between Yahweh and his people was like his own trouble is shown by the names that Hosea gives his children. Of his first son he said:

"Call his name Jezreel;
For yet a little while,
And I will avenge the blood of Jezreel*

* Jezreel was the place of the slaughter of Ahab's family by Jehu. The word means "whom God sows" and is used frequently in Hosea as a name for Israel.

Upon the house of Jehu,
And will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel
to cease.
And it shall come to pass in that day,
That I will break the bow of Israel,
In the valley of Jezreel." (Hos. i. 4, 5.)

When a daughter was born he said:

" Call her name, No-pity;
For I will no longer
Have pity for the house of Israel
That I should at all forgive them." (Hos. i. 6.)

At the birth of a son he said:

" Call his name, Not-my-people,
For ye are not my people,
And I am not your God." (Hos. i. 9.)

But does this not sound like the message of Amos, the destruction of Israel? Yes; the love that Yahweh bears to Israel is not a love that excuses sin. The sin is blighting and separates them from him so that in one sense they are not his people. Nevertheless, beneath this separation the love of Yahweh remains, always going out toward Israel.

Yahweh loves Israel in spite of her sins.

" Yahweh loves the sons of Israel,
Although they turn to other gods." (Hos. iii. 1.)

This was the triumph of Hosea—that he saw and announced for the first time that, in spite of sin and without excusing sin, true love remains.

Nor did Hosea adopt the easy doctrine that the results of sin may be excused. Just as Amos had seen that the unrighteous lives of the people would bring destruction, so Hosea says the kingdom of the house of Israel will cease. Yahweh loves Israel, even though there is no present hope of her return to him, even though he must carry out the punishment for her sins.

When finally his wife had reached the depths of degradation, Hosea saw her offered for sale as a slave, and bought her for fifteen pieces of silver and some barley. Taking her home, he said to her, "Many days shalt thou sit still"; "Thou shalt not have a husband nor will I be thine." (Hos. iii. 3). In the same way Yahweh was sending Israel into capitvity.

Nevertheless he must carry out the punishment for her sin.

"For it is through many days,
That the sons of Israel shall sit still,
Without king and without prince,
Without sacrifice and without pillar,
Without ephod and teraphim." (Hos. iii. 4.)

Evidently this is a plan for reformation. That it is for the purpose of teaching Israel a better idea of Yahweh is shown by the following, where Israel is represented as saying:

"I will go after my lovers,
Who give me my bread and my water,
My wool and my flax, my oil and my drink."
(Hos. ii. 5.)

To this Yahweh says:

"For she has not understood,
That it was I who gave her
The corn and the wine and the oil,
And multiplied her silver and gold.

Captivity only can bring Israel to see that it is Yahweh who gives all good things.

" Therefore I will take back again my corn in its time,
And my wine in its season,
And I will rescue my wool and my flax,
Given to cover her nakedness.
And I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees,
Of which she has said: these are my rewards.
And I will make them a thicket,
And the beasts of the field shall eat them.

" And I will also cause to cease all her mirth, her feasts,
Her new moon and her Sabbaths and all her festal assemblies;
And I will visit upon her the days of the Baalim,
In which she made offering to them,
And decked herself with her earrings and her jewels,
And went after her lovers,
And forgot me; it is the oracle of Yahweh.
And I will remove the names of the Baalim from her mouth.
And they shall be no more mentioned by their names." (Hos. ii. 8-13, 17.)

Hosea allows for Israel's ignorance in a way that Amos does not. Perhaps this was because he knew them more intimately. While we do not know exactly where Hosea lived, it seems certain that he must have lived in Israel, for his life was wrapped up in the life of the people. He sees that one reason why the people worshipped the different Baals of the land was that they thought they must do so if they wanted their crops to prosper.

Israel's early acquaintance with Yahweh.

Israel first became acquainted with Yahweh at Mount Sinai. There he revealed himself to Moses by the name Yahweh (Ex. vi. 3). After the deliverance from Egypt, all Israel came to Mount Sinai and there pledged their loyalty to him. The elders of Israel partook of a feast in which Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, introduced them to the worship of Yahweh

(Ex. xviii. 7-12). Through the early days of Israel's settlement in Palestine they still thought of Yahweh as having his chief abiding place on Mount Sinai. From there he came to help them in their battles (Judges v.). It was, therefore, exceedingly difficult for the children of Israel to think of Yahweh as belonging to Canaan and as giving them their products of the soil. Hosea is the first prophet to definitely declare taht Yahweh was the one to whom they should look for their wool and their flax, etc., though Amos thought of him as dwelling in the heavens. (Amos ix. 6.)

However, he is in a very difficult position, because the people have really been acting on this principle in a wrong way. They are worshipping Yahweh on their high places as though he were only a Baal* of the land. Hosea's message is a hard one for the people to understand. On the one hand, he said, Yahweh is your one God; he gives you your corn and wine and all good things, therefore you should not worship the Baals. On the other hand, he said, Yahweh is not merely a Baal of the land, and therefore you should not worship him as other people worship their Baals.

SECTION II.

YAHWEH'S CONTENTION WITH ISRAEL

Yahweh cannot find truth or loyalty among his people.

"Hear the word of Yahweh,
O children of Israel;
Yahweh has a contention
With the inhabitants of the land;
For there is no truth, nor love,
Nor knowledge of God in the land." (Hos. iv. 1.)

* Baal means "Possessor," "Owner." It was the Baal who gave fertility. Dr. Duff. refers to him as "the god of getting on."

These are the qualities for which Hosea searches in vain among the people of Israel. Instead, he finds "swearing and lying and killing and stealing" (iv. 2). Even the priests who should help the people to know God have "rejected knowledge." Indeed, the people are scarcely to blame, for they have simply followed their priests and prophets.

It is the ignorance and unfaithfulness of the priests that has made the people sinful,

"Still let none find fault,
And let none reprove,
Since my people are but like their priestlings;
Yea, a people stupid (and) falling to ruin.
O priest, thou shalt fall by day,
And the prophet also shall fall with thee,
And by night I will destroy thy mother.

"My people will be destroyed by reason of their lack of knowledge,
Because thou hast rejected knowledge,
I reject thee from being priest to me,
And because thou hast forgotten the law of thy God,
I will forget thy children, even I.

"According to their number, so they sin;
They have exchanged their glory for shame.
They feed on the sin of my people,
And unto their iniquity they lift up their souls.
And so it becomes like people, like priest:
And I will visit punishment upon his ways,
And his deeds I will requite to him."

(Hos. iv. 4-9.)

In thus following their priests they had taken up ways of worship that show that they do not understand Yahweh. They worship him in the degrading ways that people worship the Baals of the land.

Israel worships Yahweh as if he were only a Baal of the land.

" Upon the tops of the mountains they sacrifice,
And upon the hills they make offerings,
Under oaks and poplars and terebinths.
Therefore your daughters commit harlotry."
(Hos. iv. 13.)

" Yea, my people ask counsel at their wood;
Their staff declares to them the oracle."
(Hos. iv. 12.)

" Their doings do not permit them
To return to their God:
For the spirit of harlotry is within them,
And Yahweh they do not know." (Hos. v. 4.)

To be sure, they sometimes repent and turn toward Yahweh, admitting that they are worshipping him wrongly, but their repentance is only for the moment and of no value. Whenever any distress comes upon them, Yahweh knows they will seek him, being sure that he will take away the calamity. But as soon as their distress is over they return to their evil ways. Yahweh is weary of such repentance which vanishes away like the dew. It is true love that he desires, and knowledge of God.

Israel's repentance is only momentary.

" I will return again to my place,
Until they are confounded and seek my face.
In their distress they will seek me.
(Saying), Come, let us turn unto Yahweh,
For he has torn that he may heal us,
And he has smitten that he may bind us up.

" He will revive us after two or three days;
He will establish us that we may live before him.
Yea, let us know, let us be zealous to know Yahweh.
When we seek him, then we shall find him;
And he will come as the winter rain to us,
As the spring rain which waters the earth.

" What can I make of you, O Ephraim !
What can I make of you, O Israel !
Since your love is like a morning-cloud,
Yea, like the dew which early goes away.

" Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets,
I have slain them by the words of my mouth,
And my judgment is like the light which goeth forth.

" For it is love that I delight in, and not sacrifice ;
Yea, knowledge of God, and not burnt offerings."
(Hos. v. 15, to vi. 6.)

If only Israel were sincere in her repentance, Yahweh would save her.

Yahweh longs to save Israel from captivity, but cannot because of her sin.

" When I would turn the captivity of my people,
When I would heal Israel [I hold back (?)]
For the guilt of Ephraim discovers itself
And the evils of Samaria (appear)—
How they practise fraud and the thief comes in,
And bandits roam abroad without !
They are not steadfast in their heart.
All their evil I will record ;
Now their deeds have encompassed them,
They have come to be before me." (Hos. vii. 1, 2.)

The passages referred to in this chapter show unmistakably that Hosea's great desire was that Israel should have spiritual qualities in her religion, and life in whatever form it expressed itself. His reason for objecting to their worshipping under the Canaanite forms was that it brought with it the Canaanite immorality and unspirituality. Love and truth and knowledge of God—this is the trio for which Hosea pleads, a trio that might well form the ideal of any nation.

With this ideal before him, does Hosea sweep away all forms of worship as displeasing to Yahweh ? The lines that seem to give an affirmative answer to this question are :

" For it is love that I delight in and not sacrifice ;
Yea, knowledge of God, and not burnt offerings."
(Hos. vi. 6.)

Here Hosea seems to say that Yahweh does not care for burnt-offerings and sacrifices, but cares only for truth and love. In keeping with this is his recounting as among the sins of Israel that they sacrifice on the tops of the mountains (Hos. iv. 13), and that they use a staff in some way to get oracles from Yahweh.

On the other hand, Hosea certainly implies that sacrifice and pillar and ephod and teraphim are a part of Israel's rightful furniture, just as king and prince are (Hos. iii. 4). They are to be taken away for " many days " only. This shows that he did not disapprove of all sacrifice, nor did he think it entirely inconsistent with truth and love and knowledge of God, to show reverence for the sacred pillars, nor to use the ephod in finding out the will of Yahweh, nor to have teraphim in their houses. All these had been used in Israel from ancient times and seemed like a regular part of Yahweh worship. Moreover, the use of these probably did not lead to immorality in the same way as among the settled agricultural Canaanites. After Hosea's time, other prophets saw that even the use of these things was really inconsistent with Hosea's ideal, and all except sacrifice were finally banished from Israel's life. But Hosea himself attacked only those forms of worship which were connected with the Canaanite way of worshipping and living. At the same time, however, he held up the ideal which made the later development possible.

SECTION III.

ISRAEL'S CONFUSION AMONG THE NATIONS.

Hosea must haved lived into the period of anarchy following the death of Jeroboam.

Hosea's ministry began during the reign of Jeroboam II., and he probably worked on during the period of anarchy which followed. The superscription (read Hos. i. 1) strangely mentions several Judean kings and Jeroboam only of the Israelite kings. But if he had lived into the reign of Hezekiah he must have lived through the reigns of Zachariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah and Hoshea. These followed each other rapidly, chiefly by means of assassination. (Read 2 Kings xv. 8-16). Probably the superscription of the book is late, and not to be trusted, since it is inconsistent with itself. Probably Hosea did not live through the attack of Israel and Syria on Judah in the time of Ahaz, since he says nothing about it. But the evidence of the book is that Hosea lived at least into the beginning of the period when kings were falling and trying to save themselves by appeals, sometimes to Egypt and sometimes to Assyria. Hosea thinks Israel is crude and unsuccessful in the field of international politics. He scornfully calls her a cake not turned.

Israel's policy is taking her rapidly to her end, but she does not know it.

"Ephraim—among the nations he lets himself be mixed.
Ephraim—he has become a cake not turned.
Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knows it not;
Yea, gray hairs are sprinkled upon him and he knows it not;
And the pride of Israel has witnessed against him,
Yet they do not return unto Yahweh, their God,

And they do not seek him for all this ;
I will chastise them by the abundance of their afflictions.
And so Ephraim has become like a foolish dove without understanding :
To Egypt they cry, to Assyria they go.
As they go I will spread over them their net,
Like birds of the air I will bring them down."
(Hos. vii. 8-12.)

The way in which kings now come to the throne shows that they are not appointed by Yahweh, and that the heart of Israel's religion and politics is wrong.

The calf of Samaria is not God.

" Since they have made kings but not from me,
And since they have made princes but I knew them not,
With their silver and their gold made by them into idols,
Mine anger is kindled against them.
I loathe thy calf, O Samaria,
For out of Israel is it,
A smith made it, and it is not God ;
Like splinters Samaria's calf shall become.

All Israel's activity counts for nothing.

" For they sow to the wind and reap to the whirlwind :
A seed which has no stalk,
Which yields no grain,
If perchance it were to yield, strangers would devour it.
Israel is swallowed up ; already they are among the nations.
For they are gone up to Assyria,
A wild ass taking his way by himself :
Ephraim loves gifts." (Hos. viii. 4-9.)

The policy of Israel will take them finally into captivity in a strange land where they cannot worship Yahweh. They will not be able to pour out libations to him, nor prepare sacrifices for him, nor eat bread in a sacred feast to Yahweh, for they will be in a strange land, where everything is unclear.

In captivity Israel will not be able to worship Yahweh in the old ways.

" They shall not pour out libations to Yahweh,
Nor prepare for him their sacrifices.
Their bread shall be like the bread of mourning ;
All who eat it shall defile themselves.
For their bread shall be only for their hunger,
It shall not come into Yahweh's house.

To either Egypt or Assyria Israel will go where they cannot keep feasts to Yahweh

" They shall not dwell in the land of Yahweh,
And Ephraim shall return to the land of Egypt ;
And in Assyria they shall eat what is unclean.
What will ye do on the day of festival ?
Or on the day of feasting to Yahweh ?
For behold they will go to Assyria,
Egypt gathering them, Memphis burying them :
Nettles inheriting their precious things of silver :
Thorns coming up in their tents.

The prophet seems like a mad-man because he sees the awfulness of Israel's sin.

The days of visitation will come ;
The days of recompense will come ;
Israel shall know.
(The people say) A fool, the prophet ;
Mad, the man of spirit.
(Yes ;) because of the greatness of thine iniquity
and the greatness of thy sin.
Enmity exists toward Ephraim's watchman ;
The prophet (finds) the snares of the fowler in all
his ways ;
In the very house of his God they dig for him a
deep pit." (Hos. ix. 4-8.)

The way in which Hosea speaks of Israel's not being able to worship Yahweh by means of their sacred feasts, etc., when they have been carried into captivity, shows that he had not yet come to think of Yahweh as the one God of the whole world. It seems strange to us to-day that a prophet could rise to the height of seeing that the great characteristics of Yahweh are truth and love, and that these are the qualities above all else that he desires in his people, and not at the same time see that such a God must be the universal God, but it would have been more marvellous still if the men who first proclaimed the spiritual qualities of Yahweh should have been able at the same time to see all the consequences of their new vision.

Hosea not an absolute monotheist, though his message points in that direction.

Hosea had told the people that Yahweh was the one true God of Israel, that he was the one who had been giving them their corn and wine, though they did not yet know it. He did not free himself from the old Semitic idea that a god dwells in his own land; he did not rise to the idea that there could be no other gods but Yahweh. Both he and Amos, however, did open the road that leads to that conclusion.

Another step which Hosea took in the direction of monotheism was his declaration that the calf at Bethel was nothing but a thing made by a smith, and wholly displeasing to Yahweh. Amos had said nothing about worshipping Yahweh under the form of an image. No one before Hosea had pointed out the absurdity of using images to represent Yahweh. Hosea does not apply this to all images. He says nothing against the teraphim. Again, it seems to have been the things that were in connection with the immoral worship at Bethel that Hosea felt called upon specially to condemn. But people after Hosea, of course, did see that all images were foolish and wrong.

Hosea did not see the full application of his conceptions.

The way in which Hosea speaks of Israel's coming captivity throws much light on the meaning of pro-

phecy. Hosea did not yet know and did not pretend to say whether Israel would go in captivity to Egypt or Assyria. They were intriguing with both nations, and either one might succeed in taking them captive. Hosea, perhaps, did not understand the political situation of his time quite as clearly as Amos did. But he was as true a prophet, for he saw the spiritual conditions even more clearly. A prophet is "the man of spirit," that is, one who can see the things of the spirit. Hosea called himself "Ephraim's watchman." (Hos. ix. 8.)

SECTION IV.

YAHWEH'S LOVE CANNOT SAVE ISRAEL FROM CAPTIVITY.

Yahweh's early love for Israel.

"When Israel was young then I came to love him,
And out of Egypt I called him;
The more I called them,
The farther they went away from me.
They keep sacrificing to the Baalim,
And making offerings to images.

Yahweh a father.

"Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,
Taking them up in my arms;
And they did not know that I healed them.
With the cords of a man I would draw them, with
Yahweh a kind driver. bands of love;
And I was to them as one who lifts up the yoke
from upon their jaws,
And I inclined unto him and would give him to eat.

" He must return to the land of Egypt,
Or Assyria will be his king, for they have refused to return.
And so the sword will whirl in their cities,
And will devour in their fortresses.
And my people having wearied me with their rebellions,
Unto the yoke (Yahweh) will appoint them,
Since he has ceased to love them.

Yahweh must send his people into captivity.

" How can I give thee up, O Ephraim !
How can I surrender thee, O Israel !
How can I make thee as Admah ! *
How can I place thee as Zeboim !
My heart is turned within me,
My compassions grow hot together ;
I will not perform the fierceness of my anger,
I will not turn to destroy Israel. †
For God am I and not man,
Holy in the midst of thee and not human.
(I will not come to consume.)" ‡

(Hos. xi. 1-9.)

Yahweh's love is divine and unending.

In this marvellous poem occurs the earliest reference in Hebrew literature to God as a Father. Probably the first strophe which tells of how Yahweh " came to love " Israel, is still thinking of him as Israel's husband, which is the figure used in most of the book. But in the second strophe, where Yahweh is said to have taught Israel to walk, taking them up in his arms, the

* Admah and Zeboim were associated with Sodom and Gomorra. See Gen. xiv. 2, 8.

† Harper omits 8b and 9a, because he thinks they are from a later hand.

‡ This line does not make sense as it now stands in the Hebrew text. One correction gives the above reading, and another possibility is " I am not willing to consume." See the R.V. margin.

figure is probably that of a father, though the picture represents also the tenderness of a mother. In the latter part of the second strophe the figure changes again and Yahweh is thought of as a kind driver who lifts up the yoke of his oxen and gives them to eat. But in spite of all this love and tenderness for Israel, Yahweh must leave them to become the prey of foreign nations because they will not turn to him, even though it may appear that he has ceased to love them. But his love is not like that kind of human love which passes quickly away, but the love of a God, who, while he inflicts the necessary suffering, cries out :

" How can I give thee up, O Ephraim !
How can I surrender thee, O Israel ! "

So great is Yahweh's desire to save Israel that his words seem to contradict each other : On the one hand he says,

" My heart is turned within me,
I will not turn to destroy Israel." (Hos. xi. 8, 9.)

On the other hand he cries out,

" Where are thy plagues, O death ?
Where thy destruction, O Sheol ?
Repentance is hid from my eyes." (Hos. xiii. 14.)

But this is only the contradiction which must arise between yearning love and righteous condemnation. Since Israel has not repented she cannot be saved from captivity. Indeed, her captors are already upon her, for her kings are only their puppets. Ephraim is no longer a " prince in Israel " ; the present degradation can end only in disaster ; Yahweh, Israel's help, must become Israel's destruction :

" When Ephraim used to speak, men trembled ;
He was a prince in Israel.
Then he became guilty through Baal and died.
And now they continue to sin ;
And they make for themselves molten gods ;
From their silver, idols according to their own model.
Smith's work, all of it !
To such they say, O God !

Israel's early strength sapped by Baalism.

" With a people sacrificing to demons ;
With men kissing calves !
Therefore they shall be like the morning cloud,
And like the dew that early passes away ;
Like the chaff which whirleth all over the threshing floor,
And like smoke from the window.

Israel will vanish from her land like smoke from a window.

" And it was I, Yahweh, thy God,
Who brought thee up from the land of Egypt,
And a God beside me thou knowest not,
Nor has there been a saviour except me.
It was I who shepherded thee in the wilderness,
In the land of drought.
But when they fed, they filled themselves full.
And their heart was lifted up and consequently they forgot me.

Yet Yahweh is their God and shepherd.

" And so I will be to them as the lion ;
Like a leopard on the way to Assyria.
I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of its young,
And tear the enclosure of their hearts,
And there will I devour them like a lion,
While wild beasts tear them.
I am thy destruction, O Israel !
Yea, who is thy help ? " (Hos. xiii. 1-9.)

Yahweh is Israel's destruction when he might have been her help.

SECTION V.

WERE FAITH AND HOPE COMBINED WITH LOVE?

But is there no hope that Israel's punishment will bring about her reform? Did Hosea think that Yahweh's love would triumph? The answer to this question depends upon a difficult problem for which we do not have the full data, namely, How many of the hopeful passages in the book come from Hosea and how many from those who afterwards read and studied him? There can be no doubt at all that notes of later interpreters have been left in the book. Look, for instance, at i. 7, which someone interested in the restoration of Judah perhaps first wrote on the margin of his Hosea text. It breaks the connection as it stands in our text, as do also i. 10- ii. 1. Not all of iii. 5 can have been written by Hosea, for Israel of his day had nothing to do with David. They did not claim to be connected with the Davidic dynasty at all. So how can we know certainly whether or not Hosea wrote the rest of the verse, "Afterward shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God" etc. And how can we be certain whether Hosea himself wrote chapter xiv., where Israel is pictured as having fallen (xiv. 1); having apparently responded to an exhortation to repentance (xiv. 2-3) since Yahweh's anger is now turned away (xiv. 4-8.); (verse 9 is certainly a later addition). Certainly one must be careful about making dogmatic statements about such difficult problems.

However, let us look at the matter from the standpoint of Hosea's chief message. We have seen that he learned his lesson of Yahweh's love for sinful Israel by his own love for his sinful wife. Now there can be scarcely any doubt that his reason for buying

his wife back was the hope of reclaiming her in the course of time. He plans to shut her away from her paramours so that she will say, "Let me go and return to my first husband" (ii. 7). In the same way Yahweh plans to take away from Israel all the things connected with her worship of the Baalim. Out in the wilderness (*i.e.* in captivity) she would forget all about the Baalim (ii. 17), and be betrothed to Yahweh in righteousness (ii. 19). So far Hosea's message was based upon his experience. Now did he succeed in reclaiming his wife and upon this base a belief that Yahweh would succeed in reclaiming Israel? There is no answer to this question, for Hosea does not tell us. The most we can say is that everything that love could do he was doing, and he was confident that Yahweh would do as much and more for Israel. Surely this is the greatest thing about Hosea's message —his belief in the persistence of love, in the fact that God's love always follows us though we may never respond to it. "Love never faileth" even though it may not succeed! It may well be that Hosea thought that Yahweh's love would certainly succeed even though his own failed of its immediate hope. At any rate, there are a few verses that give such a picture in language embodying Hosea's figure of marriage:

"And I will make for them a covenant with the beasts,
And the bow and the sword and war
I shall break out of the land,
And I will make them lie down in safety,
Yea, I will betroth thee unto me forever in kindness
and in mercy
I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou
shalt know Yahweh." (Hos. ii. 18-23.)

If these are the words of Hosea he may also have looked forward to the time when Yahweh could say:

"I will heal their backsliding,
I will love them freely,
For mine anger is turned away.
I will be as the dew to Israel
He shall blossom as the lily
And cast forth his roots as Lebanon."

(Hos. xiv. 4, 5.)

But whether or not Hosea believed in this beautiful consummation of Yahweh's love, he was sure of the love that follows always the erring, whether it win them or not. So marvellous is that spark of divinity, that power to say "I will," or "I will not" given to every individual and therefore to every nation, that God Himself must wait before it. The great thing is to be sure, as Hosea was sure, of the never-failing love and to press on in the strength of it.

ISAIAH.

SECTION I.

THE CALL.

It was "in the year that King Uzziah died," that Isaiah "saw the Lord." (Isa. vi. 1.)

Uzziah, or Azariah, had reigned for fifty years, and during that time Judah had become one of the strongest of the small states of Palestine. He had extended her borders toward the south and west, and had used the increased income to fortify Jerusalem and the country. (Read 2 Kings, xiv. 22; xv. 1-7; 2 Chron. xxvi. 1-15, and consult a map.)

What would be the result to Judah of the death of so strong a king? Might the terrible conditions that had come upon Israel since the death of their strong king, Jeroboam, come now upon Judah? Indeed, were not the people of Judah sinful like the people of Israel? To be sure they did not have a place of false Yahweh worship as the Israelites had at Bethel; the Jerusalem temple had been built for true Yahweh worship from the plans of the great King David. But were the people of Judah not unjust to one another as Amos had declared the people of Israel were? Were they not disloyal to Yahweh and ignorant of his true character, as Hosea had shown that the people of Israel were? Would Judah's

temple, with its comparatively purer worship, save her from the same anarchy which prevailed in Israel if her people were unjust in their living and ignorant of Yahweh? Some such thoughts as these must have filled the mind of the young man, Isaiah, as he was one day worshipping in the temple, and there he "saw" the answer to his questionings. He "saw" clearly that Yahweh with all his holiness ought to be the one great centre of all Judah's worship, and that they must become a holy people if they hoped to please Yahweh. Not only did he see that this was true, but he felt that Yahweh himself was there, filling the temple and speaking to him! In after years he described his experience as follows:

Yahweh is far greater than his temple; his presence makes it sacred.

"I saw the Lord sitting upon a high and uplifted throne; the train of his robe filled the temple. Seraphim stood erect before him; each one had six wings; one pair covered the face, another the loins, and the third served for flight. And again and again they cried to one another, saying:

Yahweh is holy; his glory is seen in all the earth.

"Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Sabaoth,
The whole earth is full of his glory.

"And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the sound of their voices, and the temple was filled with smoke. And I said: Woe is me! I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips! I dwell amid a people of unclean lips! Mine eyes have seen the King, Yahweh Sabaoth! Then flew to me one of the Seraphim with a hot stone in his hand, that he had taken with tongs from off the altar; and with it he touched my mouth and said: Lo! this has touched thy lips; thy iniquity is gone, and thy sin forgiven. And I heard the voice of Yahweh saying: Whom shall I send? and who will go for us? And I said: Here am I; send me." (Isa. vi. 1-9.)

Before Yahweh man is unclean.

Yahweh's presence purifies.

He who has known Yahweh's presence must proclaim him to others.

It is impossible, from this description, to form a perfectly clear picture of the vision of Isaiah, but the

inner meaning of it is plain. It was a moment of illumination when Yahweh and his relation to the future of his people was seen in a new light—the light of the holiness and glory of Yahweh. In this light Isaiah saw that he himself and the people among whom he lived were far below the standard—their lives were not righteous, and their worship was ignorant, for Yahweh was far greater than the temple and its ceremonies, and to be holy like him was the one important thing. But did this mean that Yahweh was so far above his people that they could not reach him? No, he would cleanse them if they would turn to him! Isaiah felt that in this moment of communion with Yahweh he himself was cleansed. Moreover, he felt that this experience was not for himself alone, but constituted a message which he must take to the people of Judah. "Here am I; send me!" his heart cried out, but even at that moment he realized that his task would be a difficult one. To make the people of Judah holy like Yahweh their God! to accomplish this would take more than preaching. How would the people receive his preaching? All too plainly he could see them turning away with hardened hearts. It was because he saw this so plainly that the voice seemed to say to him,

"Go, and say to this people:

Hear on, but understand not! See on, but perceive not!
Make fat this people's heart,
Make dull their ears, and besmear their eyes,
Lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears,
And their heart understand and their health be restored." (Isa. vi. 9, 10.)

To see the truth would only harden the hearts of some.

It did not require any miraculous view of the future to see that if he went to the people and told them to

become holy like Yahweh their God, they would pay little attention to his words. Isaiah knew human nature, and could easily see what the result of his preaching would be to the mass of the people.

That Isaiah thought of this shows that his vision was not an ecstatic experience in which his mind was inactive. It was not that part of his powers were asleep, nor that he was in a half-dazed condition while miraculous sights and sounds came to him. Instead, he was fully awake, mind and heart. He was stirred by the power of a new idea—the holiness and glory of Yahweh. He saw that Yahweh was not only just, as Amos had said; he was not only loving, as Hosea had said; but he was purity itself, and the glory of this purity was all about him. This moral purity of Yahweh separated him from man only so long as man wished to remain impure. Isaiah was stirred not only by this new idea about Yahweh, but by feeling himself unclean in his presence, and by the knowledge that all the people of Israel were unclean in the light of Yahweh's holiness, but might become holy. It would be a long process to bring the people of Israel up to Yahweh's standard. The next natural question is:

"How long O Lord?" (Isa. vi. 11.)

The answer to this question is not far to seek. Purification is a long process, and it is also a painful one. Judah, like Israel, must be devastated before they would understand and become like Yahweh. The question "How long?" therefore receives its answer:

Punishment and hardship would be necessary to bring people to Yahweh.

"Until cities be waste without inhabitants,
And houses without men,
And the land be left a desolation,

And Yahweh have sent men far away,
And in the heart of the land the desert regions be wide." *

When Isaiah left the temple that day, it was to face a new work in which all things should be measured by the words which were ringing in his ears :

" Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh Sabaoth,
The whole earth is full of his glory."

SECTION II.

EARLY SERMONS.

To see a vision of God in a Temple is one thing ; to keep that vision when one walks in the streets is another. To see an ideal of what a nation ought to be is one thing ; to hold up that ideal in the face of the whole nation is another. Isaiah was great enough not only to see new ideals and their meaning, but to steadfastly apply them to the actual people and actual situations of his time.

How he tried to apply his ideal to different situations and different people the rest of his writings show. It is probable that the sermons of Isaiah were first written by himself or his disciples in small groups and first circulated in that way. Chapter ii. 1 to ix. 7 was the first collection made. Therefore, in

* vi. 13 is difficult to translate, and the words " The stock thereof is holy seed " are not in the oldest version, the Septuagint ; they were, perhaps, not a part of the original text.

Chapters ii. iii. and iv. we find the earliest account of his work.

The little book opens with a quotation! At least the same words are found in the Book of Micah (iv. 1-5), with two additional verses. (Compare the passages.)* But Micah did not preach until the time of Hezekiah (read Jer. xxvi. 19); how, therefore, could Isaiah be quoting Micah since this first sermon certainly comes soon after the death of Uzziah and soon after Isaiah's vision in the temple? The passage is not like anything else in Micah, and, therefore, he is probably quoting it, too. It would be natural to ask if he were not quoting it from Isaiah if he did not give the additional verses which evidently belonged to the original. Possibly some unknown prophet of Judah, contemporary with Isaiah, had given this picture of the future exaltation of Jerusalem, and it had taken hold upon the minds of both Isaiah and Micah. It was a picture which the people, too, would be glad to remember, for they were looking forward to the "Day of Yahweh."

Mount Zion shall one day be exalted.

"And it shall come to pass in the latter days
That the mountain of Yahweh's house
Shall be established in the top of the mountains;
And shall be exalted above the hills;

All nations will make pilgrimages to the house of Yahweh.

"And all nations shall flow unto it.
And many peoples shall go and say,
'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh,
To the house of the God of Jacob;

Many peoples will wish to seek the oracle of Yahweh.

"'And he will teach us his ways,
And we will walk in his paths:
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
And the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem.

* Isa. ii. 2-4; and Micah iv. 1-5.

" 'And he shall judge between the nations,
And shall reprove many peoples;
And they shall beat their swords into plough-shares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war any more.' "
(Isa. ii. 2-4.)

When Yahweh is judge among the peoples there will be no more war.

To this Micah adds what must have originally been the conclusion of the passage:

" And they shall sit every one
Under his vine and under his fig-tree,
And none shall make them afraid;
For the mouth of Yahweh Sabaoth has spoken it.

Each nation will dwell happily in its own land, being no longer afraid of their neighbour nations.

" For all the peoples will walk,
Each one in the name of his god,
And we will walk
In the name of Yahweh our God forever and ever."
(Micah iv. 4, 5.)

Each nation will walk in the name of its god, while acknowledging the supremacy of Yahweh.

According to this poem Jerusalem was to become a religious centre for the world and Yahweh a teacher and judge of " all nations." These nations were not to become Israelites; they were to keep their own individuality, live under their own vine and fig-tree, and walk in the name of their own gods, but Yahweh should be supreme and should " judge between the nations." This supremacy of Yahweh would bring peace. With Yahweh to " judge between the nations " and " reprove many peoples," war would be no longer necessary and swords and spears might be made into agricultural instruments. This idea of the supremacy of Yahweh among the other gods was one which an early and crude age might easily hold. They recognized the existence of other gods, but thought

them to be inferior to Yahweh. They looked forward to a "Day of Yahweh," when his superiority would be recognized.

It is interesting, however, that Isaiah does not use the verse which says that other nations will walk in the names of their various gods (Micah. iv. 5). His preoccupation with the conception of Yahweh as one whose glory fills all the earth caused him to leave out references to other gods and instead to summon Israel thus:

No great day can come to Judah until they walk in the light of Yahweh.

"O, House of Jacob, come ye,
And let us walk in the light of Yahweh." (Isa. ii. 5.)

The "light of Yahweh" recalls Isaiah's vision in the temple, and it soon becomes apparent that he is looking at the actual conditions in Jerusalem in the light of the holiness of Yahweh. Instead of caring for Yahweh and his ways the people are taking up the styles of the east (ii. 6) and thinking about wealth (ii. 7). "Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made" (ii. 8). The "Day of Yahweh," therefore, which is coming will be a day of terror (ii. 12).

Since the people do not walk in Yahweh's light they must be humbled before Yahweh can be exalted.

"The lofty looks of man shall be brought low,
And the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down,
And Yahweh alone shall be exalted in that day."
(Isa. ii. 11.)

This humbling of the people before the greatness of Yahweh is set forth through pictures of the bringing down of the "cedars of Lebanon," the mountains, etc. (read ii. 13-17), and it is difficult to know how literally Isaiah means his further description,

When in their humiliation, the people see the greatness of Yahweh, they will, at first, try to hide from him.

" And men shall go into the caves of the rocks, and into the holes of the earth,
From before the terror of Yahweh, and from the glory of his majesty,
When he arises to shake mightily the earth."
(Isa. ii. 19.)

One thing is sure, however, Isaiah believes that the present way of living in Israel will bring humbling rather than exaltation, and he suggests that Yahweh may take away Judah's food supply—the " whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water " (iii. 1)—and thus actually humble her. Indeed, it scarcely seems too strong to say that Isaiah expects Judah to be ravaged by an army and be almost, if not quite, destroyed.

" For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen ;
Because their tongue and their doings are against Yahweh,
To provoke the eyes of his glory." (Isa. iii. 8.)

Is Isaiah, then, giving the same message as Amos did ? He certainly is laying emphasis on much the same sins :

" Yahweh will enter into judgment with the elders of his people, and the princes thereof ;
It is ye that have eaten up the vineyard ; the spoil of the poor is in your houses ;
What mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the poor ?
Saith Yahweh, Yahweh of hosts." (Isa. iii. 14, 15.)

Isaiah shows the same disgust with the luxury and vanity of the people that Amos showed, and like Amos also, he puts the chief responsibility for it upon the women, as is shown by his scornful description of how they mince along the streets, decked out in their

pendants and bracelets and mufflers and head-tires and ankle-chains and sashes and perfume boxes, etc., etc. (Read iii. 16-25.)

Like Amos, too, Isaiah is proclaiming a terrible "Day of Yahweh." But is this "Day of Yahweh" to be destruction? No, he believes that some will understand his message and turn to Yahweh. He takes a step further and believes that some of the people will be reformed. This idea is expressed in a beautiful picture of a purified Jerusalem, in which "he that is left in Zion and he that remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called holy, even everyone that is written among the living in Jerusalem; when Yahweh shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion." Then Yahweh will not strike terror to the hearts of his people by the "eyes of his glory" (iii. 8), for when every citizen of Jerusalem is holy they will rejoice in the holiness of Yahweh and the fact that "the whole earth is full of his glory" (vi. 3).

"In that day shall the growth of Yahweh be goodly
and forever,
And the fruit of the land glorious and beautiful,
For it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion,
Even he that is spared in Jerusalem, shall be called
holy;
Everyone that is enrolled to live in Jerusalem."

(Isa. iv. 2, 3.)

SECTION III.

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD.

" A song will I sing of my friend,
A love song touching his vineyard.

" A vineyard belongs to my friend,
On a hill that is fruitful and sunny ;
He digged it, and cleared it of stones,
And planted there vines that are choice ;
A tower he built in the midst,
And hewed also therein a wine-vat ;
And he looked to find grapes that are good,
Alas ! it bore grapes that are wild.

" Ye, in Jerusalem dwelling,
And ye, who are freemen of Judah,
Judge ye, I pray, between me
And my cherished vineyard.
What could have been done for my vineyard
That I had not done ?
When I looked to find grapes that are good,
Why bore it grapes that are wild ?

" And now let me give you to know
What I purpose to do to my vineyard :
I will take away its hedge,
That it be eaten up,
I will break through its walls,
That it be trodden down ;
Yea, I will make it a waste,
Neither pruned nor weeded.

Yahweh expected justice and righteousness to grow in Judah.

"It shall shoot up in thorns and briars,
And the clouds will I enjoin that they rain not upon it.
For the vineyard of Yahweh Sabaoth is the House of Israel,
And the men of Judah his cherished plantation;
And he looked for justice, but behold! bloodshed,
For righteousness, but behold! an outcry."
(Isa. v. 1-7.)

Here Isaiah brings himself before the people in the guise of a minstrel singer, chanting a song about the vineyard of a friend. The melody of the song and the interest of the story would attract the people. This vineyard on a sunny hillside that had been carefully tended, why did it not produce good grapes? The answer was clear; the difficulty must be in the grape-vines; the only thing to do was to dig them up and plant new vines. But as the listeners carelessly, pleasantly assented to this course of events, they suddenly found that they had assented to their own up-rooting. They themselves were the unfruitful vineyard of Yahweh. The man before them was no longer a minstrel singer, but a preacher of righteousness, who was dinning into their ears woes upon their sins.

Judah's rich people secure all the land and live luxuriously, calling themselves good and wise and thus bring trouble upon all.

"Woe unto them that join house to house and lay field to field, till there be no room."
"Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink."
"Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity."
"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil."
"Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes."
(Read Isa. v. 8-24.)

Because of these conditions in Judah, houses and land shall be desolate (v. 9, 10); because the people

do not know what kind of a God Yahweh is—" for lack of knowledge "—they must go into captivity (v. 13). Much of which Judah is proud, must go into the under world for

Much of Judah's civil organization must be destroyed before Yahweh can be exalted.

" Yahweh of hosts is exalted in judgment,
And God, the Holy one, is sanctified in righteousness." (Isa. v. 14-16.)

Either at this time or soon after Isaiah spoke an oracle concerning Israel. It was clear to all that Israel was approaching ruin. Isaiah points out Israel's sins and her coming doom as a warning to Israel:

" A word has the Lord sent unto Jacob,
And it shall light down on Israel,
That all the people may feel it,
Yea, Ephraim, and the men of Samaria,
Who have stiffened their neck in pride
And in stoutness of heart saying:
Bricks have fallen down, but with hewn stone will we build up,
Sycamores have been felled, but cedars shall fill their place.
Hence against them Yahweh stirred up their foe,
And their enemies he spurred on,
Syria on the East, the Philistines on the West,
And they devoured Israel greedily.
FOR ALL THIS HIS ANGER TURNED NOT AWAY,
AND STILL WAS HIS HAND OUTSTRETCHED.

Israel would not heed the word of Yahweh.

Israel proudly thought to repair all her injuries without the help of Yahweh.

Yahweh sent Syria and Philistia against Israel.

" But to him who smote them the people turned not,
And Yahweh they did not regard.
So from Israel Yahweh cut off head and tail,
Palm-branch and rush in one day;
The elder and the man of eminence, he is the head,
And the prophet who gives false oracles, he is the tail.

Though Yahweh punished Israel, she would not turn to him.

Israel's guides have proved false.

So the guides of this people proved misleading,
And those who were guided by them were distraught,
Therefore the Lord spares not their young warriors,
And on widows and orphans he has no compassion,
Because everyone is impious and an evil-doer.
And every mouth speaks folly.
FOR ALL THIS HIS ANGER TURNED NOT AWAY,
AND STILL WAS HIS HAND OUTSTRETCHED.

Even widows and orphans must suffer, since the nation is full of folly.

Unrighteousness is like a fast-spreading fire.

" For unrighteousness burns like a fire,
Consuming thorns and briars;
It kindles the thickets of the forest,
Upward they whirl in columns of smoke.
By the fury of Yahweh the land was burned up,
And the people became food for the flames.
They carved off slices on the right, and still they were famished,
They devoured on the left, and still were unsatisfied;
None had pity on his fellow,
Everyone devoured his neighbour's flesh:
Manasseh devoured Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh,
But both together they were against Judah.
FOR ALL THIS HIS ANGER TURNED NOT AWAY,
AND STILL WAS HIS HAND OUTSTRETCHED.

(Isa. ix. 8-21.)

To the fire of unrighteousness is added the fury of Yahweh.

Unrighteousness produces civil strife.

Israel's judges make laws for their own benefit. They take the property of the defenceless.

" Woe unto those who set up unjust decrees,
And scribes who busily write oppression,
To turn aside the helpless from judgment,
And to despoil the wretched of my people of their rights,
That widows may be their prey,
And that orphans may be their plunder!
What, then, will ye do in the day of visitation
And of crashing storm which comes from afar?
To whom for aid will ye flee?
And where will ye leave your wealth?

When retribution comes unjust judges will have no refuge.

Beltis has sunk down, Osiris* is broken.
And under the slain they fall.
FOR ALL THIS HIS ANGER IS NOT TURNED AWAY,
AND HIS HAND IS STILL OUTSTRETCHED. (Isa. x. 1-4.)

Yahweh will bring a distant nation against Israel.

So he will raise a signal to a distant nation,
And hiss to them to come from the end of the earth ;
And lo ! speedily, swiftly they come.
None there is weary, and among them none stumbles,

The enemy will come with a perfectly disciplined army.

The zone of their loins is not loosened,
Of their sandals there tears not a thong.
Their arrows are sharpened,
And their bows are all bent,
The hoofs of their horses are counted as flint,
And as a whirlwind their wheels ;
Their roaring is like that of the lion,
Yea, like young lions they roar,
And growl, and seize the prey,

There will be no hope of escape.

And carry it off safe, and none rescues it."
(Isa. v. 26-29.)

This closes what may be called the first period of Isaiah's ministry. It is easy to see that in these early sermons he is a disciple of Amos. He is sure that Israel must fall, as Amos has said, and he almost comes to the point of saying that since Judah has the same sins she must also fall. The parable of the vineyard taken by itself means that Yahweh will have to destroy Judah and plant a new vineyard, and several sentences in Chapter 3 seem to indicate that Judah will fall. But must he not already have had some idea of how Yahweh was to secure a new vineyard that would produce righteousness ? Also it must have been in this early period that he named a child of his Shear-jashub, "a remnant shall turn." He must, therefore, have believed almost from the first that some would

* Beltis was a Phœnician deity and Osiris an Egyptian.

turn to Yahweh. But he wished, first of all, to arouse people to a realization of their sins and the inevitable result of such ways of living.

Isaiah's early ministry probably lasted about five years. Then Ahaz came to the throne of Judah and Tiglath-pileser to that of Assyria, and set his face westward to conquer the Syrian states.

SECTION IV.

A MESSAGE TO THE KING.

One effect of the coming west of Tiglath-pileser III. was the Syro-Ephraimitish war. What more natural thing for the little states of Palestine to do than to join together to ward off the great Assyrian power? Rezin, King of Syria, and Pekah, King of Israel, made plans to face the Assyrians together but they knew, of course, that they would be as nothing before the Assyrian host. Therefore, they made up their mind that Judah ought to join them. During the reign of Jotham they had tried to bring about an alliance, but had failed (read 2 Kings xv. 37), and Ahaz, who succeeded Jotham about 735 B.C., had quite another plan in mind. He would go to meet the Assyrian king and tell him of the plot of Israel and Damascus and so secure his favour. However, Syria and Israel determined to take desperate measures to make Judah join them. They decided to take Jerusalem, remove Ahaz from the throne and make one of their vassals king. The man they planned to put in the place of Ahaz they called the "son of

Tabeel," but he is not heard of elsewhere. (Read Isa. vii. 5, 6.)

It would seem that they moved upon Jerusalem with unexpected swiftness, which greatly excited the people and the king, for Isaiah graphically describes how " Ahaz's heart and the heart of the people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind." (Isa. vii. 2.)

What had Isaiah the dreamer, the poet, the preacher, to do with a political crisis of this kind ? Whatever others may have thought, Isaiah felt that his vision of Yahweh had given him a message for this crisis. Up to this time Isaiah has been preaching coming judgment. One might have expected, therefore, that he would come forth at this juncture to say, Now the fulfilment of my words is coming. But, instead, going out to meet the king, where he was examining the water supply of the city, his words of greeting to him are,

" Take heed and be quiet ;
Fear not, neither let thine heart be faint,
Because of these two tails of smoking firebrands."
(Isa. vii. 4.)

Let the King fear not.

" Thus saith the Lord Yahweh,
It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.
For the head of Syria is Damascus,
And the head of Damascus is Rezin ;
* And the head of Ephraim is Samaria,
And the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son,
If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." (Isa. vii. 7-9.)

Yahweh will protect Judah.

* This leaves out the last part of verse 8 : "And within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken in pieces that it be not a people." This must be a marginal note which has gotten into the text by mistake. But who could have written it, for it was not sixty-five years, but only fifteen years after this that Ephraim fell ?

It is a message of good cheer, then, that Isaiah brings to the king. Rezin, he says, belongs in Damascus, and Pekah, Remaliah's son, in Ephraim. You have done right in paying no attention to their demands that you join them against Assyria. They have nothing to do with Judah; Judah need have nothing to do with them. They are only "two fag-ends of smoking firebrands," who need not be feared.

Isaiah had brought with him, on this visit to the king, his little son, Shear-jashub, but the only part in the conference which the little fellow seems to have been called upon to take was the bearing of his name—which would, indeed, seem enough! But how did king Ahaz know that his name was Shear-jashub? Did Isaiah introduce the boy to the king? Surely he must have done so now if he had not before, for the boy's name, meaning "a remnant shall turn (to Yahweh)" was an important part of Isaiah's message to the king. Isaiah believed that a small part of the people would become holy, and all his work was for the purpose of finding or making this holy remnant. Now he had no smaller hope than that of persuading the king to belong to this remnant. To show that it was an important choice he was offering him, he said, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." This sentence was much more graphic in the Hebrew than it can be rendered in English. The same verb is used in both parts of the sentence. It is the verb root, *'aman*, from which our word, amen, comes. It meant originally to confirm or support, but Isaiah's use of it here is the beginning of its use as one of the great words of religion, belief in God—faith. "If ye believe not (have not firm confidence) ye will not be confirmed" (Heb. Dict.). "If ye hold not fast verily ye shall not stand fast" (Poly. Bib.). "If ye will not have faith, ye shall not have staith" (G. A. Smith). These are some of the attempts to express as strongly as Isaiah did the issue which he put before the king.

A remnant shall turn to Yahweh; will the King be of this remnant?

Belief in Yahweh a necessary part of belonging to the remnant.

Ahaz must have turned away from Isaiah, or given some sign that he was not pleased with his words, for Isaiah is impelled to speak again and to use another plan to get the king to believe his message. He makes a most extraordinary offer. "Ask thee a sign of Yahweh, thy God," he cried, "choose it either from Sheol below, or from the height above." So sure was Isaiah that his message was from Yahweh that he dared offer Ahaz any sign he might demand to prove its truth.

Isaiah willing to stake everything on the truth of Yahweh's message.

Why did Isaiah put this issue so sharply to Ahaz? Since Syria and Israel could not hurt Jerusalem anyway, why was it so important for Ahaz to believe Isaiah's message? To understand this fully it is necessary to realize that issues are at stake which are not actually mentioned in their conversation. Isaiah must have known that Ahaz was thinking of going to ask the help and protection of the Assyrian king, which he did shortly after. Or if he did not know this definitely he had divined it. Isaiah knew that this would be like inviting one's enemy in to plunder one, and worse still, it would be distrusting the plans and power of Yahweh to protect Israel; it would mean that parts at least, of the Assyrian religion would be introduced into Israel. Israel's political existence and Israel's religion, then, were at stake, and this is why Isaiah dared offer Ahaz any sign under heaven.

Isaiah hopes to stop Ahaz in his plan of appealing to Assyria for help against Israel and Syria.

If Ahaz had joined Isaiah in his work of making the people of Israel just and righteous they might have created a new epoch in Israelitish religion, but Ahaz was weak and did not care for moral and religious standards. He gave his answer and lost his one great chance.

Covering his irreligion with a pious sounding sentence, he said, "I will not ask, neither will I put Yahweh to the test." To this Isaiah replied, "Hear now, O House of David; is it not enough for you to weary men, but ye must weary my God also?"

Ahaz refuses to consider the truth of Yahweh's words and to join the "remnant."

Apparently Ahaz has been pursuing a vaccillating policy for some time. No one could tell whether he believed in what Isaiah was preaching or not, or whether he had any clear beliefs or principles. And now he had tried to give another non-committal answer, but this time it amounted to a refusal of Yahweh's words, therefore Isaiah delivers the rest of his message :

A child shall be named Immanuel.

" Therefore the Lord* Himself will give you a sign : Behold, a young woman will conceive, † and bear a son, and will call his name Immanuel ; (soured milk and honey will be his food when he knows how to refuse the evil, and choose the good) because before the boy knows how to refuse evil, and choose the good, the land, of whose two kings thou art sore afraid, will be unpeopled. Yahweh shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah ; even the King of Assyria." (Isa. vii. 14-17.)

Ahaz must learn that God is with Judah by deliverance accompanied by punishment.

As Isaiah had brought his child Shear-jashub as a sign to Ahaz that he might, if he would, be one of the remnant loyal to Yahweh, so now using the same device to impress his meaning he says that a young woman ‡ shall bear a son whom she shall call Immanuel, *i.e.*, God with us. But why should a child be named Immanuel ? How is Ahaz to know that God is still with Israel ?

First, by showing that his word about Syria and Damascus was true, for in a year or so a mother would name her new-born son, Immanuel, in token of Israel's deliverance from her present enemies, Rezin and Remaliah. It would be extremely important and interesting if it were possible to know whether Isaiah

* The Hebrew word is Adonai here, not Yahweh,

† Probably the translation should be " has conceived."

‡ The Hebrew word translated " Virgin " means simply " a young woman of marriageable age."

had any particular child in mind. But the Hebrew is uncertain, *and as no emphasis seems to be laid upon the identity of the child it seems better to conclude that no particular child is meant. Isaiah here, as often, uses a name to graphically embody an idea. Here Immanuel means that Judah is to know that God is with her by deliverance, although this is to be accompanied by the reduction of the land to pasture (vii. 18-25), so that there would be only curds and honey to eat. Yahweh will speak whether or not Ahaz will listen.

SECTION V.

AN APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE.

Though Isaiah had failed to win King Ahaz as one of his "remnant," he did not despair of winning some of the people. Taking a great clay tablet he wrote upon it:

"FOR MAHER-SHALAL-HASH-BAZ."

Isaiah sets up a tablet in the market place.

Taking with him Uriah the priest and Zechariah, a well-known citizen, he set the tablet up in some public place, where all might read it and be warned or puzzled by its meaning:

"SWIFT-SPOIL-SPEEDY-PREY."

* It is uncertain whether the text should be translated "the young woman" or "a young woman," and uncertain whether one should read "Thou shalt call his name," or "She shall call."

One cannot help imagining the excitement with which the people would gather around so strange a tablet. How many of the people could read it? Would some be trying to spell it out and others explaining to them? What could it mean, they would ask each other—that Syria and Israel would succeed and take Jerusalem? If the hearts of the people were moved "as the trees of the forest are moved by the wind" when they heard that these two nations were coming against them, might they not be still more frightened at the words of this tablet? They would be still more dismayed when they learned that Isaiah had given to a new-born son this same terrible name, Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Surely the people could not understand the meaning of these strange devices without asking Isaiah to explain. But he was ready to explain; indeed, these dramatic ways of giving his message were used simply for the purpose of getting into touch with the people with the hope of winning some. Did they wish to know who is to be made spoil and prey? Why Isaiah had given his child so ominous a name? Isaiah was ready to tell them. Because, he said, "before the boy knows how to cry 'My father' and 'My mother,' they will carry off the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria before the King of Assyria." Ah, then, it would be only their enemies who could become spoil and prey? The answer to that depended on the people! Why did they go about trembling and frightened, making each other less and less courageous by talking in bated breath about the "conspiracy" of Syria and Israel? (viii. 12). Isaiah announces to them that Yahweh had told him not to join in their talk about "a conspiracy," nor be drawn into their fears. Why need they be afraid of anyone except Yahweh? He, indeed, is holy, and if their lives are unholy then there is good reason to be afraid before him. This is the only fear that is worthy an Israelite; this is, indeed, the rock over which many an inhabitant of Jerusalem

Isaiah gives a son an ominous name.

Tablet and name explained.

The fear of the people is unworthy.

will stumble—he will disregard the holiness of Yahweh and, failing to make his own life holy, will " fall and be broken " when he might have belonged to the holy remnant upon which Yahweh will found his holy city. Isaiah cries out to the people :

Yahweh alone is to be feared.

" Yahweh Sabaoth, Him count ye holy,
Let him be your fear and let him be your dread,
He shall be a stone to strike against,
A rock of stumbling to both Houses of Israel.
A trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
Many shall stumble thereover,
And shall fall and be broken,
And be snared and taken." (Isa. viii. 13-15.)

Ahaz appeals to Assyria.

It must have been in this period that Ahaz carried out his plan of appealing to the King of Assyria. First, he sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser, saying, " I am thy servant, and thy son ; come up, and save me out of the hand of the King of Syria and out of the hand of the King of Israel, which rise up against me " (2 Kings xvi. 7). Along with this message he sent the gold and silver from the house of Yahweh ! (2 Kings xvi. 8). This could not have been done without the consent of the priest and at least some of the people. Ahaz, then, had the support of the mass of the people ; most of the people had rejected Isaiah's message. This discouraging result is seen in the rest of Isaiah's words at this time :

" And Yahweh spake unto me yet again, saying,
" Forasmuch as this people hath refused the waters
of Shiloah that go softly,
And faint before* Rezin and Remaliah's son,
Now, therefore, Yahweh bringeth up upon them the
waters of the river, strong and many,

* A very little change in the Hebrew text gives the reading " faint before," instead of " rejoice in." It certainly suits the context much better.

Even the King of Assyria and all his glory;
And he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks;
And he shall sweep onward into Judah;
He shall overflow and pass through;
He shall reach even to the neck;
And the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of the land:
For God is with us." *

The Assyrian army, like a great river, shall overflow Judah.

The contrast which Isaiah draws here between the trickling waters of Shiloah and the strong waters of the Euphrates, to indicate the contrast between Israel and Assyria is one of his finest figures. The people were afraid to trust in the resources of Israel because they seemed, comparatively, so small. Their fears had supported Ahaz in his appeal to Assyria. They themselves, then, were opening the sluice-ways for the Euphrates to deluge their land. Now nothing can stay its coming. Since they did not count that God was with them to protect them against the plot of their neighbour nations, they must now learn that God is with them by the calamity of the inundation of the Assyrians. The sign Immanuel here seems to regard punishment as proof of Yahweh's presence, unless possibly the stretched-out wings are those of Yahweh in protection.

The fears of the people will bring their calamities.

Having delivered his message as clearly as he knew how, having done all he could in the crisis of the moment, Isaiah prepared to withdraw from public life for a time. On the whole, he had failed; he had convinced but few that his advice was right; he had won only a few to a higher idea of Yahweh. He felt that Yahweh was hiding his face, but this did not make him doubt him; it only meant that he must wait for further light. While waiting he planned also to put

* This reading instead of "thy land, O Immanuel," requires only the change of the position of one letter, and there is not anything in the context to suggest a king named Immanuel.

his message into writing and his first book was probably written at this time. It is interesting that Isaiah seems to have won a small group of disciples. He says:

Isaiah retires for a time to write his message and wait for further direction from Yahweh.

"I will bind up the admonition, and seal the instruction among my disciples; and I will wait for Yahweh, who hides his face from the house of Jacob, and in him will I hope. Behold, I and the children whom Yahweh has given me are signs and symbols of what shall be in Israel from Yahweh Sabaoth who dwells in Zion." (Isa. viii. 16-18).

These three names, then, he considers sum up his message:

Isaiah—Yahweh saves.
Shear-jashub—a remnant shall turn.
Maher-shalal-hash-baz—Swift-spoil-speedy-prey.

SECTION VI.

FAILURE EXTENDS FAITH.

CERTAINLY some of the bad results that Isaiah expected to come from an Assyrian alliance soon made their appearance, for Ahaz eagerly introduced Assyrian customs. In 732 Tiglath-pileser took Damascus, thus extinguishing one of the smoking "fire-brands" of which the people had been so foolishly afraid. Perhaps it was at this time that Isaiah wrote:

Damascus falls.

" Behold Damascus is taken away from being a city,
And it shall be a ruinous heap." (Isa xvii. 1.)

At this time Pekah was taken off the throne of Israel and Hoshea placed there as the representative of Assyria, therefore the time would not be far distant when Israel's glory would also depart. (Read Isa. xvii. 1-11.)

Ahaz goes to meet the Assyrian King at Damascus.

As soon as the Assyrian king was in Damascus Ahaz travelled up to meet him. He evidently tried to make himself as agreeable as possible to impress the king that he need expect no trouble from Judah. He showed himself anxious to introduce Assyrian modes into Israel. Seeing " the altar that was at Damascus " he sent the pattern of it to the priest at Jerusalem telling him to make one like it and put it up in the temple of Yahweh. (See 2 Kings xvi. 9-12.) Now this was doubtless an Assyrian altar, and its introduction into Jerusalem meant the showing of deference to the Assyrian gods. When Ahaz returned he made a number of other changes suggested by his visit and doubtless to please the King of Assyria (see 2 Kings xvi. 18). It is probable that he also introduced sun-worship, for his name is connected with it later. (See 2 Kings xxiii. 11, 12.)

Ahaz introduces Assyrian worship into Israel.

Isaiah prepares his " testimony " for the people when they may seek for it.

While these things were taking place in Jerusalem Isaiah and his disciples were somewhere in seclusion. The book was being written and the present and future of Judah was being considered. The people seemed to have forgotten Yahweh; they sought oracles from wizards and even tried to get advice from the dead* concerning the living. Why did not " a people seek unto their God ? " " To the law and to the testimony," they will cry when the dark days come. Then, perchance, they will hunt for the oracles of Isaiah which they had rejected before

* According to the Hebrew idea, the dead had a dreary, shadowy existence in Sheol. It therefore seemed absurd that they should help the living.

(Isa. viii. 19, 20).* Isaiah told his disciples that the time of darkness would be terrible to the people.

" And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and hungry ;
And it shall come to pass that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves,
And curse by their king and by their God,
And they shall turn their faces upwards ; and they shall look unto the earth,
And behold distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish ;
And into thick darkness they shall be driven away."
(Isa. viii. 21, 22).

The days of darkness will be terrible.

Is there, then, nothing but darkness ? Will Judah never be worthy of the destiny of a people whose God is holy and whose glory fills all the earth ? Has Isaiah's failure to win the king and the people made him lose faith in his ideals ? No, nothing seems able ever to shake his faith ? He is only waiting and waiting with hope and courage (viii. 17). No doubt he infused his faith also into the band of disciples gathered about him. One cannot help wishing to know how large a band this was, but there is no evidence, and however small it may have been, Isaiah's faith was equal to believing that they could become the basis of a new and righteous state. Therefore, he pointed them to the future for the realization of the ideal—not the very far distant future either, for the light is to follow soon upon the darkness.

Isaiah teaches his disciples to expect the realization of their ideals.

After the Assyrian invasion and domination which the people and king have brought upon themselves, the yoke of the oppressor shall be broken even as the yoke of Israel's Egyptian bondage in the days of old. Then will come a time of great joy ; people will rejoice

* Instead of " if they speak not," etc. (v. 20), read, " surely they shall speak according to this word when there is no dawn for them."

continually like the rejoicings of the harvest feast or like those who exultingly divide the booty after battle. Then there shall be a great king. Isaiah indicates the character of this king and the period that he will inaugurate by his name. Accordingly he thinks of him as a child having this name conferred upon him. The names indicate a king who is a wise judge, a hero who, having subdued all his enemies, would bring in an era of peace, justice and righteousness. Surely it would have meant very little to that group of disciples, who were trying to be true to Yahweh, in a difficult period, to be given a picture of a glorious king and kingdom hundreds of years in the future. Isaiah and his disciples must certainly have expected it in their day—or at least not long after. They expected to give their lives to help bring in the new day.

After the darkness will come light and joy,

"The people that walk in darkness,*
Shall see a great light;
On them that dwell in a gloomy land,
A brightness shall burst.
Thou wilt cause abundant exultation;
Thou wilt create exceeding joy;
Men shall rejoice before thee as they rejoice in harvest,
As they exult when they divide booty.

Every sign of the nation that oppressed Judah will disappear.

"For the yoke that burdeneth them,
And the staff on their shoulders,
The rod of their taskmaster,
Thou wilt break, as in the day of Midian,
Yea, every boot tramping noisily,
And the cloak dragged in blood,
Shall be burned,
Be fuel for the fire.

* This is the translation of H. G. Mitchell, except v. 7. which is from the Polychrome Bible.

" For a child shall be born to us,
A son shall be given to us ;
And the sovereignty shall be on his shoulder ;
And they shall call his name
Wondrous counsellor, mighty-lord,
Booty-taker, Prince of Peace.

Judah will have a great king.

" Increased will be dominion,
And to peace there will be no end
Upon the throne of David
And throughout his kingdom,
To establish and to support it,
By justice and by righteousness
From henceforth and forever
The zeal of Yahweh will perform this."
(Isa. ix. 2-7).*

Peace, justice and righteousness will rule in the new era.

SECTION VII.

ISAIAH'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY.

THE PROPHET AS A PRACTICAL STATESMAN.

ALL Isaiah's work as a statesman was based upon the principle that history is not unregulated and unmotived. He taught and acted upon the belief that behind history is a God of Holiness and that, therefore, the course of history moves according to the laws of righteousness, and has for its aim the elevation of man, the making of man like God. It was on this principle that his predictions of events were made.

* ix. 1b is a marginal note by a later hand.

They were neither haphazard guesses nor mysterious prognostications. They were conclusions drawn from his knowledge of the political situation of his time, and his belief that righteousness would triumph and unrighteousness perish. He had said that Israel and Syria could not take Jerusalem. This conclusion rested chiefly upon the fact that the demand which they made that Judah should join their conspiracy was an unjust one, but also, no doubt, upon the fact that it was a foolish enterprise, which would only bring the Assyrian upon the scene the quicker to quell and punish conspiracy. Upon these same facts, plus his knowledge of the special conditions in Israel, Isaiah based also his conclusion that Syria and Israel would soon both fall before Assyria.

While Isaiah and his disciples were in retirement they saw the fulfilment of these expectations. Damascus had fallen in 732. Isaiah reiterates his woe against Israel and describes how "The crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim shall be trodden under foot" (xxviii. 3) by the Assyrians who will come "Like a storm of hail, a destroying tempest." (xxviii. 2.) The way in which the Assyrians will devour Israel is described by an interesting figure:

Assyria will swallow Israel like a delicious fig.

"And it will be like an early fig before the fruit-season,
Which as soon as a man sees in his hand he swallows." (Isa. xxviii. 4.)

Hezekiah comes to the throne of Judah and Shalmanezer IV. to the throne of Assyria.

(Read Isa. xxviii. 1-4.) Israel's fate did not come until 722 and by that time Ahaz was dead. In about 727, probably, his son Hezekiah came to the throne, and certainly in that year there was a new Assyrian king, Shalmanezer IV. One cannot help wishing that we knew more about the young man Hezekiah, for he seems such an entirely different character from his father. Beginning to reign when twenty-five years of age, he found himself confronted with a most

difficult situation. There was heavy tribute to be paid every year to Assyria, bequeathed to him by his father, but more perplexing than that was the part that Egypt was trying to take in affairs in Palestine. Egypt was ambitious to rival Assyria, and was, therefore, attempting to get as many of the Syrian states as possible to join a conspiracy against Assyria. It was "in the year that King Ahaz died" that messengers came to Hezekiah's court from Philistia, who had been persuaded by Egypt to rebel against Assyria, to invite him also to join the Egyptian alliance. What course would the young king take? Did he ask advice from Isaiah? Whether he asked advice or not Isaiah gave it. The words seem more like a delicate tendering of advice than an answer:

Egyptian intrigue against Assyria begins.

"Rejoice not in all thy borders, Philistia,
That the rod which smote thee is broken!
For out of the serpent's root will issue a basilisk,
And a flying dragon will be its fruit.

The Philistines are foolish to rejoice over the death of Shalmanezer IV. as he will doubtless be followed by another even more cruel.

"The poor will feed on my meadows,
And the needy will lie down securely;
But thy seed I will kill with famine,
And thy remnant will I slay.

Philistia's fate will be far worse than Judah's; there will be not even a remnant left.

"Howl, O Gate! Cry, O city!
Faint in all thy borders, Philistia!
For out of the north comes the smoke of the foe,
And no straggler is left in his levies.

Already the new Assyrian King is on his way far in the north.

"And what will the king of my people answer
If messengers of a nation should speak to him?
That Yahweh has founded Zion,
And there the afflicted of his people find refuge."
(Isa. xiv. 28-32.)

Judah must join no alliances—must seek refuge in Yahweh only.

The marvel is that this advice of Isaiah's was followed by Hezekiah. How did it come about that he was

willing to follow Isaiah? It was not because any calamity had yet come upon Judah as a result of the policy of Ahaz. The only results so far had been the degradation of the religion of Yahweh and the necessity of paying the Assyrian tax. Probably most people of the time considered that Ahaz had been the practical statesman, while Isaiah was only an impractical dreamer. Yet the dreamer seems to have won the heart of the young king who "trusted in Yahweh, the God of Israel" and did not make a treaty with Egypt (2 Kings xviii. 5).

Hezekiah joins Isaiah in his work.

But in Israel affairs were different. Hoshea, who had been put on the throne by Assyria, and, of course, had pledged absolute loyalty, nevertheless was persuaded by the Egyptian agitators and rebelled. Soon Shalmanezer was on the spot to take vengeance. After a terrible siege of three years Samaria fell and Israel was practically blotted out of existence. In the year that Samaria fell Sargon succeeded Shalmanezer; the account of the victory is, therefore, in the records of Sargon, who says:

Israel utterly destroyed.

"Samaria I besieged, I captured; 27,290 of its inhabitants I carried off."

Not only did he carry away the Israelites, but sent eastern peoples to occupy the land. (Read 2 Kings xvii. 3-6, 24.) Thus was the other "smoking fire-brand" utterly extinguished.

Isaiah has great difficulty in keeping Judah from joining the Egyptian alliance.

The fate of Israel must have had a tremendous influence in Judah. Probably it brought recruits to Isaiah and when in 720 several of the Syrian states rebel, Judah has nothing to do with their rebellion. Assyria defeats Egypt in that year. When, however, the same rebellions take place in 711 and Sargon had to come to Palestine again to put down revolt he mentions Judah in a way that shows what odds Isaiah and his party had to work against. Sargon says:

"The kings of Philistia, Judah, Edom, Moab,

dwellers by the sea, payers of tribute and gifts to Ashur, my lord, plotters of sedition, did not refrain from mischief, for in order to stir up rebellion against me they brought gifts of friendship to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, a prince who was no saviour to them, and sued with him for an alliance." (See McCurdy's "Hist. Proph. and the Monuments," p. 418.)

Isaiah dresses in mourning for three years as a sign that Egypt would fall before Assyria.

The Egyptian party was growing stronger, and it would seem that a device which Isaiah used at this time to impress his idea of the situation was the going about for a period of three years "naked," *i.e.*, clothed only in an undergarment, like a beggar or a mourner. This was for a "sign and a warning to Egypt and Ethiopia," but, no doubt, his chief desire was to keep people in Jerusalem from joining the Egyptian party, for, having said that the Assyrian power should be extended into Egypt, he makes the most important part of his picture the dismay of those who have trusted in Egypt.

Egypt will be a false hope to any who expect her to help against Assyria.

"And those who looked to Ethiopia, and boasted of Egypt, will be dismayed and disappointed. And the inhabitants of this coast will say in that day: Truly, if such is the plight of those to whom we looked, and to whom we fled for help to obtain safety from the King of Assyria, how can we ourselves hope to escape?" (Read Isa. xx. 1-6.)

Is it not strange that Isaiah thus counselled faithfulness to Assyria all through this period, when he had rebuked Ahaz for becoming subject to Assyria? Might not one have expected such an idealist to counsel independence at any cost? This simply shows, of course, that Isaiah was not an idealist who did not take account of facts as they were. His faith in the greatness of Yahweh, and his great purpose for Israel never wavered, but under the circumstances, with the Assyrian yoke already upon them, the best hope of being able to live and carry on their work was in remaining passively under the Assyrian.

Therefore, Isaiah did everything in his power to decrease the Egyptian party, and at the same time to build up the moral and religious life of the people; in order that there might be a holy "remnant" upon which to build the new state after the inevitable clash with Assyria came.

SECTION VIII.

ASSYRIA, YAHWEH'S ROD.

Sennacherib becomes King of Assyria.

In 705 a new king ascended the Assyrian throne, Sennacherib, who called himself "the great king, the powerful king, the king of the world, the king of Assyria, the king of the four zones, the wise shepherd, the favourite of the great gods, the protector of justice, the lover of righteousness, he who gives help, who goes to assist the weak, who frequents the sanctuaries, the perfect hero, the manful warrior, the first of all princes, the great, he who destroys the rebellious, who destroys the enemies." (Sayce, "Records of the Past," Vol. VI., p. 81).

Surely all the little states of Syria ought to walk circumspectly under such a king, nevertheless seditions were rife. He had them near his own capital also, for in Babylon was a certain Merodach-baladan, who aspired to gain all he could. He even sent an embassy over to Hezekiah to congratulate him on recovery from an illness and chiefly, no doubt, to see if Hezekiah could be of any use to him against Sennacherib. There is no mention of this visit in Isaiah's own writings, however, and the account in xxxix. 1-8 is much later, hence one cannot be certain of the details.

Merodach-baladan of Babylon, an enemy of Sennacherib, visits Hezekiah.

But one who did certainly come at this time to make overtures of friendship to Hezekiah was the king of Ethiopia, who was doubtless Tirhakah, who later dared to attack the Assyrian army. Isaiah addresses an oracle to this embassy :

Hezekiah visited by an embassy from the Ethiopian King.

" Ah, land, of the shrill buzzing of insects' wings,
Which sends ambassadors on the sea, and in skiffs
of reed on the face of the water !
Depart, ye fleet messengers, to a nation tall and
of polished skin,
To a people dreaded far and wide, a nation of
sinewy strength and victorious,
Whose land the rivers cut through.
All ye inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the
earth,
When a signal is raised on the mountains, behold !
when a horn is sounded, hearken !

Let the Ethiopian messengers return to their own land,

Let all the world watch to see what will happen in Jerusalem.

" Thus has Yahweh said to me : I will hold me still
and look in my place,
As still as the clear heat in sunshine, as the dewy
mist in the heart of the harvest ;
For before the harvest, when the blossom is over,
and the berry becomes a ripening grape,
He will lop the branches with pruning knives, and
cut off and cast away the tendrils.
They will be left together to the ravenous birds of
the mountains and to the beasts of the land.
Thereon the ravenous birds will summer, thereon
all the beasts of the land will winter."
(Isa. xviii. 1-7.)

Yahweh will quietly wait until Assyria's triumph seems just at hand ; then he will suddenly cut them off.

Here a new idea emerges. The Assyrian, too, shall feel the hand of Yahweh. All through his early ministry Isaiah had announced the coming of Assyria. Now that the fulfilment of that expectation is probably near at hand he faces the situation more intimately, and asks, But how far will Yahweh allow

Assyria to advance against Judah? And what is Assyria's relation to Yahweh? These questions he answers definitely:

Assyria is the rod which Yahweh uses to punish a wicked nation.

"Woe! Assur, the rod of mine anger,
And the staff of mine indignation!
Against an impious nation am I wont to send him,
And against the people of my wrath to give him a charge,
To take spoil and to seize booty,
And to trample them like mire in the streets.
But he—not so does he plan,
And his mind, not so does he reckon;
For extirpation is in his mind,
And to cut off nations, not a few.

But Assyria does not know of Yahweh's plans.

For he says:
Are not my captains, all of them, kings?
Has not Calno* fared like Carchemish?
And Hamath like Arpad?
Or Samaria like Damascus?" (Isa. x. 5-9.)

Just as in his early sermons Isaiah had told Judah that she must be brought low because of her pride, so now when her punisher draws near and Isaiah sees what pride and arrogance Assyria shows he declares again that Yahweh alone must be exalted. Assyria claims to do everything by his own strength:

Assyria boasts of his own power.

"By the strength of my hand have I done it,
And by my wisdom, for I have discernment;
And I removed the bounds of the peoples,
And their treasures I plundered. (Isa. x. 13.)
And on the riches of the peoples
My hand has seized as on a nest;

* These six cities had fallen into the hands of the Assyrians. Hamath was situated between the Lebanon ranges. Arpad and Calno were north of Hamath, and Carchemish near the Euphrates.

As unguarded eggs are carried away,
Have I carried off all the earth;
There was none that fluttered the wing,
Or opened the beak, and chirped." (Isa. x. 14.)

Like a robber of birds' nests, Assyria carries off the treasures of the peoples; no one dares chirp.

"Sworn hath Yahweh Sabaoth;
Surely, as I have planned, so shall it be,
And as I have purposed, it shall stand,
To break in pieces, Assur in my land,
And to tread him under foot upon my mountains.

But it is only Yahweh's purpose that will stand.

"This is the purpose formed against the whole earth,
This is the hand stretched out over all nations.
Yahweh Sabaoth has purposed, who can thwart him?
His is the outstretched hand, who can turn him back?" (Isa. xiv. 24-27.)

No one in all the earth can thwart Yahweh's purpose.

And does Isaiah claim to know what this purpose of Yahweh is? Even so. Ever since the day of his vision in the temple he has been sure that Yahweh must win for himself a holy people. He must, therefore, be controlling the movements of nations in the interests of this purpose, and Assyria can come no farther against Judah than is consonant with this purpose. Assyria is Yahweh's rod with which to chastise Judah, but when the chastising is done the rod may be broken in order that Israel may learn to "lean in faithfulness on Yahweh, Israel's Holy One." (Isa. x. 20.)

Yahweh's purpose is to make a righteous nation of Judah.

On this idealistic theory Isaiah dares to forecast the results of the coming of Assyria. He pictures them coming down from the north to attack Jerusalem; the villages to the north of Jerusalem (read x. 28-32*)

* Aiath-Ai, east of Bethel, and nine miles north of Jerusalem. All the other places named were probably in that region, though all have not been identified.

will be filled with terror, but they will fall and the road will lay open to Jerusalem, but even as Assyria shakes his hand at Jerusalem Yahweh will cut him down :

When Assyria is ready to attack Judah from the north, he will be himself cut down.

"Behold, the Lord Yahweh lops with a crash the crown of branches ;
The high of stature are hewn down, and the lofty are brought low ;
The thickets of the forest are cut down with the axe,
And Lebanon's grove with its mighty cedars is felled." (Isa. x. 33, 34.)

This picture of an attack upon Jerusalem from the north was never realized, for Jerusalem was actually attacked from the south later. But that the details of Isaiah's prophecy did not come true, and that his disciples let the word stand in his book shows how little they felt that the real greatness of a prophecy depended on ability to foretell events exactly. Isaiah was a great prophet for his own generation as well as for later times, not because he foretold events in a marvellous way, but because he absolutely believed in a spiritual principle and that events ought to be interpreted in the light of this principle. That righteousness must rule he was sure, and that the God of righteousness was behind all events. He dared apply this principle to the actual events of his time, though he might be mistaken as to details.

Perhaps it was in this period that Isaiah gives another picture of the ideal king and the era of peace. Perhaps the picture was given at this time to inspire Hezekiah to keep himself in line with the true purpose of Yahweh.

A King of Judah shall be who will do all things according to the spirit of Yahweh.

"There will come forth a shoot from the stock of Jesse,
And a scion from his roots will bear fruit.
The spirit of Yahweh will rest on him,

A spirit of wisdom and discernment,
A spirit of counsel and might,
A spirit of knowledge and fear of Yahweh.
He will not judge according to all that his eyes have seen,
Nor give decision according to that which his ears have heard,
But with righteousness will he judge the helpless,
And with equity will he give decision for the destitute in the land;
And with the breath of his lips will he slay the ungodly;
And righteousness will be the zone about his loins,
And faithfulness the girdle about his reins.
And the wolf will lodge with the lamb,
And the leopard will lie down with the kid;
And the calf and young lion will graze together,
And a little child serve as their leader.
The cow and the bear will graze,
Together with their young ones lie down,
And the lion will eat straw like the ox;
And the suckling will play about the hole of the asp,
And the weaned child shall stretch forth his hand to the basilisk's den.
And they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Yahweh, as the waters cover the sea."

(Isaiah xi. 1-9.)

He will not simply follow the popular clamour, but will judge with equity and righteousness.

He will slay the ungodly, and thus bring in an era of peace in which even the animals will partake.

The animals that formerly struck terror to man and beast will stop killing and hurting and live as friends.

SECTION IX.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE PRINCES OF THE COURT.

Isaiah goes to the princes of the court while they are having a feast.

THE people who made it most difficult for Isaiah to get king and people to follow his counsel were the crowd of dissolute nobles who surrounded the court. Isaiah once had an interview with them. Going to them at one of their feasts, probably a religious feast held in the outer court of the temple, he faces them with the fact that their counsel to the nation is of little value since they are all drunkards, even the priests and prophets reel with wine. The half-drunken nobles at the tables, however, mock at Isaiah because he is for ever repeating what seems to them his senseless message about waiting and finding that Yahweh would bring them the true "rest" from their difficulties. Such advice, they declare, was only for children. "Whom, say they, would he teach knowledge? And to whom explain a revelation? To weanlings, forsooth, just parted from the breast? For he is ever gibbering: *Cav-la-cav, cav-la-cav; qav-la-qav, qav-la-qav; here a word, there a word." Thus they called the prophet an idle gibberer, but since that is all they can see in the words of Yahweh, Isaiah declares that the time is coming when he will speak to them in terrible events because they would not listen to Isaiah before. And then they cannot understand "cav-la-cav, cav-la-cav; qav-la-qav, qav-la-qav; here a word, there a word. So that, as they go, they may stumble, and fall backward, and be shattered, be ensnared, and be taken." (Isaiah xxviii. 7-13).

Isaiah gives his message—do nothing, wait, trust in Yahweh.

The princes mock Isaiah, repeating syllables to show how tired they are of hearing him repeat his message.

Isaiah replies to the princes, using the same meaningless syllables to represent how the word of Yahweh will come to them in terrible accents.

After this strange conversation Isaiah proceeds to the main points of his message to them, which is to

* These are meaningless syllables.

warn them against entering into a "covenant with death," *i.e.*, into an alliance with Egypt by which they think to escape death, but which will really bring death.

Isaiah announces that he has discovered the plots of the princes to break their promises to Assyria and make a covenant with Egypt.

"Therefore hear the word of Yahweh, ye men of scorn!
Rulers of this people which is in Jerusalem!
Because ye have said: We have entered into a covenant with death,
And with Sheol have we made a compact;
The overwhelming scourge, when it passes, will not reach us,
For we have made a lie our refuge,
And in falsehood we have hidden ourselves.

There is only one fundamental thing in Israel—one cornerstone that cannot be swept away, that it is safe to build upon; this is a belief in Yahweh and his purpose for Israel, which expresses itself in justice and righteousness.

Thus, therefore, says the Lord Yahweh:
Behold, I found in Zion a stone, a tried stone,
A precious foundation cornerstone;
He who believes will be firmly planted,
And I will make justice the measuring line,
And righteousness the plumb-weight;
And hail will sweep away the refuge,
And waters will overwhelm the hiding place;
And your covenant with death will be wiped out,
And your compact with Sheol will not stand:

All intrigues will prove of no avail.

When the whelming scourge passes through
By it will ye be beaten down." (Isa. xxviii. 14-19.)

Surely these words were plain enough so that they might be understood, unless these nobles thought all talk about justice and righteousness was mere gibberish. They probably thought what he said about belief to be nonsense. Just as when he was talking to Ahaz, so now Isaiah says, If you will believe you will be established. Believe what? In the supreme greatness of Yahweh, and that he has a great purpose for Israel which he will carry out in spite of Assyrians or any other outsider if Israel will only become just and righteous. If they believed this they would not fly to Egypt for refuge. They would help build up

the city on this "foundation-stone." Isaiah can mean nothing else by the "precious foundation corner-stone" than this great purpose of Yahweh for Israel. And the measuring-line for this foundation stone is justice and righteousness. Whoever, then, believes in this foundation-stone for Israel can be known by the earnestness with which he is working for righteousness.

Did these nobles reply to Isaiah that it seemed very strange to them that Yahweh should deal differently with different nations, especially that he should allow Israel to be crushed by Assyria, but should save Judah? Did they say they thought it strange to believe that Yahweh would save Judah when everything seemed to fall before Assyria? At least Isaiah gives an answer to that sort of a query (read xxviii. 21) by means of a parable taken from the work of the farmer:

Yahweh has taught the farmer how to plough and grow various kinds of grains.

"Listen, and hear ye my voice,
Attend, and hear ye my speech.
Is the ploughman never done with his ploughing,
With the opening and harrowing of ground?
Does he not, when its surface is levelled,
Scatter fennel, and sow cummin* broadcast,
And duly set wheat there and barley,
And for its border plant spelt?*
It is Yahweh who has taught these right courses,
It is his God who has trained him.

From Yahweh also proceeds the wisdom to treat the different grains in different ways.

"We do not thresh fennel with sledges,
Nor are cart-wheels rolled over cummin,
But fennel is threshed with a staff,
And cummin is threshed with a rod.
Do we ever crush bread-corn to pieces?

* Cummin and fennel: small seeds that were used for seasoning food. Spelt: something used for a border and protection.

Nay, the threshing goes not on forever,
And when over it cart-wheels are driven,
Or sledges, our care is never to crush it.
This also from Yahweh proceeds:
Wonderful counsel, great wisdom has He."
(Isa. xxviii. 23-29.)

Shall not Yahweh act on the same natural laws that he has taught the farmer? Has he no purpose in over-turning nations? Surely he is also ploughing, not for the sake of ploughing, but in order that he may sow.

Even as the thresher is wise enough to thresh different kinds of grain in different ways, so Yahweh deals with different nations in different ways, according to what they are.

This statement of general principles is followed by a picture of how Isaiah believes Yahweh will deal with Judah. Now everything seems to be going on regularly—the appointed feasts are kept, etc. But soon distress will come; "siege-works" will be raised against Jerusalem and her inhabitants brought down into the dust. But this is only the ploughing or the threshing, for soon Judah's enemies shall be scattered like chaff; they shall be like "a vision of the night." Those who thought to devour Israel shall be disappointed. "Yea, as when a hungry man dreams he is eating, but awakes with his appetite keen; or when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking, but awakes faint from his unquenched thirst; so will it be with the hordes of all the nations that fight against Mount Zion." (Read Isa. xxix. 1-8.)*

Yahweh is ploughing other nations, and will soon plough Judah.

But the ploughing shall cease when the ground is ready for sowing.

This was certainly a daring programme to put forth, and it is perhaps not surprising that people found it difficult to believe. The way in which both learned and unlearned found it difficult to comprehend is set forth in a graphic way:

* In this passage Judah is called Ariel. The meaning of the the word is uncertain. It may mean altar, hearth, or lion.

Neither learned nor unlearned seem to understand Yahweh's purpose.

"The prophecy of all these things is become to you a sealed book, which if one delivers to a man who is a scholar, saying: Pray read this, he says, I cannot, for it is sealed; and should it be delivered to one who is no scholar with the words: Pray read this, he says: I am no scholar." (Isa. xxix. 11, 12.)

In time Yahweh's plan will be clear.

But this strange work is to be wrought for Judah in order that Yahweh may have a righteous people. Yahweh is a potter skilfully turning out a vessel (xxix. 16). In a "very little while" the new city will be organized. Then the meek and the poor shall "rejoice in the Holy One of Israel" (xxix. 19.) Scorners shall cease and "they that watch for iniquity" (xxix. 20). All shall "stand in awe of the God of Israel." Read (Isa. xxix. 15-24.)

SECTION X.

REBELLION AND ITS RESULTS.

At last all the expostulations of the prophet are disregarded and a treaty is concluded with Egypt. Isaiah expresses himself strongly concerning it:

An embassy sets out to conclude a treaty with Egypt.

"Woe to the unruly sons! says Yahweh,
Carrying out a purpose which is not mine,
And concluding a treaty contrary to my spirit,
Thus adding sin to sin;
Who set forth on the way to Egypt without asking
my counsel. (Isa. xxx. 1-2.)

"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help,
And stay on horses and trust in chariots because they are many,
And in horsemen, because they are very strong,
But they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek Yahweh." (Read Isa. xxxi. 1-3.)

Rebellion against Assyria is also rebellion against Yahweh.

Isaiah rebukes most severely a man by the name of Shebna who seems to have been a foreigner who had settled in Jerusalem and even built himself a splendid tomb there, who had won influence at Hezekiah's court, and was trying to bring about the Egyptian alliance. (Read Isa. xxii. 15-18.)

"A wily politician denounced."

Isaiah describes how the messengers went down to Egypt, carrying presents "upon the backs of young asses and upon the humps of camels" (Read Isa. xxx. 6). Of course all this means that Hezekiah had finally rejected the prophet's advice, and followed that of Shebna and other courtiers. Isaiah, therefore, plans to do as he had once before done when his message was rejected—to write it down for a testimony.

The embassy is on its way carrying rich gifts.

"Now go in, write it down, and on a scroll inscribe it,
That it may serve in days to come as a testimony forever.
For it is a rebellious people, lying sons,
Sons who will not hear the direction of Yahweh;
Who say to the seers: See not!
And to the prophets: Prophesy not to us true things!
Speaks to us smooth things, prophesy delusions!
Turn from the way, go aside from the path,
Trouble us no more with Israel's Holy One."

Isaiah again writes down his message to those who have rejected it, who have asked him to talk no more to them about Yahweh.

The people have decided to trust in intrigue rather than the principles of righteousness.

Thus therefore, says Israel's Holy One: Because ye reject this word, and trust in wile and policy, and rely thereon, therefore this guilty act shall be to you

But intrigue only makes matters worse, so that when the crash comes it will be sudden and final.

like a bulge caused by a breach in a lofty wall ready to fall at an instant, and to which breaking comes suddenly, full suddenly. Yea, it breaks, as one dashes an earthen pitcher to pieces, shattering it ruthlessly, so that, among its shattered pieces, not a sherd is found, wherewith to take up fire from the hearth, or to draw water from the cistern. For thus had the Lord Yahweh, Israel's Holy One, said :

In quietness and confidence Judah might have escaped a terrible sieg and might have been strong in themselves.

Now king and people must take the consequences of their deeds.

All Judah will be deluged with war, so that only a remnant will stand above the flood like a pole on the top of a hill.

" By turning and remaining quiet ye would have been delivered,
In quietness and pious trust ye would have found your true strength ;
But ye refused, and said :
' No, but on horses will we fly.' Therefore shall ye flee !
' And on that which runs swift will we ride.' Therefore shall your pursuers be swift !
Ye shall flee at a war-cry of fire, till your remnant is become
Like a pole on the top of a mountain, and like a signal on a hill." (Isa. xxx. 8-17.)

Having determined upon his course Hezekiah seems to have acted vigorously, for Sennacherib says in his inscription that when the people of Ekron also rebelled against Assyria they handed over their king, Padi, to Hezekiah, who put him in prison. (See Sayce " Records of the Past," Vol. VI, p. 89.) Hezekiah had conquered the Philistines in the early part of his reign (2 Kings xviii. 8) and was regarded as their over-lord, but this event shows, too, that Hezekiah became an ardent leader in the revolt against Assyria.

Hezekiah a leader in the revolt against Assyria.

Sennacherib hastens to Palestine.

As soon as news reached Assyria of the treatment of King Padi, Sennacherib set out for Palestine. Isaiah was right in saying that such a policy would bring Assyria upon Judah. Down from the north came the hosts of Assyria, moving along the coast, aiming

straight for Ekron ravaging all the country on the way. All Syria was filled with terror and the petty princes of the various cities and districts hastened to send their gifts and assure Sennacherib of their allegiance to him!

Many Syrian States deny their intrigue with Egypt.

At this juncture Egypt appeared on the scene. Egypt and Assyria met in battle and Assyria won. Next Ekron was taken and thoroughly punished. The inscription says:

Tirhakah, King of Egypt and Ethiopia, attempts to fulfil some of his promises and stop Sennacherib but is defeated.

"1. To the city of Ekron I went; the governors
"2. (and) princes, who had committed a transgression I killed and
"3. Bound their corpses on poles around the city."*

Ekron punished for rebellion.

Would all this success and cruelty of Assyria strike no terror to the hearts of the people of Judah when next Sennacherib set his forces moving in their direction? On marched the Assyrian, taking city after city of Hezekiah's possessions.

Sennacherib sets out to punish Judah also.

"Hezekiah, of Judah, who had not submitted to my yoke, I besieged 46 of his strong cities, fortresses and small cities of their environs without number, and by casting down the walls and advancing the engines, by an assault of the light-armed soldiers, by breaches, by striking and by axes I took them; 200,150 men, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen and sheep without number I brought out from them, I counted them as spoil." (Sayce "Records of the Past," Vol. VI., p. 90).

All Judah ravaged, cities destroyed, people and cattle taken as spoil.

This was, indeed, the overflowing of the mighty river of Assyria and it was reaching "even to the neck" (viii. 7, 8). Where was Isaiah during these days and what was his message now? If ever a preacher had a chance to preach repentance Isaiah had it now, and he used it. The frightened people who had scorned him before would be anxious to

Isaiah preaches repentance with redoubled energy.

* Cf. Sayce, "Records of the Past," Vol. VI. p. 90.

hear him now. There is one magnificent sermon of his from this period :

Judah does not know Yahweh in his true character.

" Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for Yahweh speaks ;
Sons I have reared and set on high, and they have rebelled against me,
The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib ;
Israel has no knowledge, my people no discernment !
Ah, sinful nation, guilt-laden people,
Race of evil-doers, degenerate children !
They have forsaken Yahweh, spurned Israel's Holy One, gone back in estrangement."
(Isa. i. 1-4.)

It is because king and people forsook Yahweh that they are now beset by the enemy :

Now Judah is ravaged ; only Jerusalem remains untouched like a booth in a vineyard.

" Your land is a desolation, your cities are burned with fire,
Your tilled land—strangers devour it before your face.
Zion is left like a booth in a vineyard,
Like a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, like a besieged city." (Isa. i. 7-8.)

Evidently the people were hoping to propitiate Yahweh by bringing great numbers of sacrifices. They were suddenly very religious in this time of danger, but—

" What care I for the great number of your sacrifices ? says Yahweh." (Isa. i. 11.)

Nothing but actual righteousness counts with Yahweh.

Only one thing will suffice—

" Wash you, make you clean.
Let me see the evil of your doings no more,

Seek out justice, chastise the violent,
Right the orphan, plead for the widow."

"Come now, and let us argue together, says Yahweh ;
If your sins be as scarlet, they may become as white snow ;
Be they red as crimson, they may become as wool.
If ye be willing and obedient, the good of the land shall ye eat,
But if ye refuse and resist, by the sword be ye eaten !
The mouth of Yahweh has spoken it ! "
(Isa. i. 16-20.)

Still there is hope if Judah will become righteous.

All this loss and peril from the Assyrian army Isaiah declared was for the purpose of purging away the dross of the nation, but when things are purified there shall yet come a time when Jerusalem shall be called a "Citadel of Righteousness, Faithful City."

"O, how is she become a harlot, the faithful city,
Zion, which was full of justice, where righteousness abode !
Thy silver is changed to dross, thy wine weakened with water.
Thy rulers are unruly and companions of thieves ;
Everyone loves bribes and is running after fees ;
The cause of the widow comes not near them, the orphan they right not,
Therefore this is the oracle of Yahweh Sabaoth, the hero of Israel ;
Aha ! I will vent my displeasure on mine adversaries, and take vengeance on mine enemies ;
I will turn my hand against thee, and will smelt out in the furnace thy dross,
I will remove all thine alloy ;

Now Judah is unholy ; injustice and sin rule.

When the punishment shall have passed by Jerusalem shall be called "The City of Righteousness."

I will bring back thy judges as at the first, and thy
counsellors as at the beginning;
Thereafter thou wilt be called Citadel of Righteous-
ness, Faithful City." (Isa. i. 21-26.)

SECTION XI.

IDEALS FINALLY WIN.

NOT only did Isaiah ardently preach righteousness to the people of Judah while the Assyrians were marching upon them, but he upheld the ideals that had come to him as a young man in the temple. However, even as he has applied these ideals in a different way whenever conditions became different in Judah, so now in a new crisis he has a new application. Will Yahweh permit Jerusalem to be taken? This is the question that is agitating all minds. For Isaiah, the problem would be this: In order to secure a holy remnant upon which to build his righteous city is it necessary that Jerusalem shall be taken and the unrighteous there punished, or is the punishment sufficient now that the whole country is ravaged? He had declared before that the rod of Assyria should be broken when its purpose was fulfilled, but just when would that be? Isaiah decided that Jerusalem would not be taken; Yahweh would protect his temple city.

Yahweh cannot allow Jerusalem to be taken.

"Like fluttering birds, so will Yahweh Sabaoth shelter
Jerusalem,
Sheltering and delivering, sparing and rescuing her."
(Isa. xxxi. 5.)

This beautiful figure of Yahweh hovering above Jerusalem with protecting wings as the mother-bird flutters about her nest when enemies are near, may be taken as representative of the hope that Isaiah held out to Jerusalem in the hour of her great need. It cannot be certain exactly how he expressed this in the final crisis, because in the intensity of the moment no record was written. But that he was counselling faith in Yahweh and reform as the means of safety is certain from the results that follow after the deliverance.

On came the Assyrian army. Sennacherib took up his headquarters at Lachish, to the south of Jerusalem, but sent his officer with an army to demand the surrender of the city. He says :

Assyria demands the surrender of Jerusalem.

" Hezekiah himself I shut up like a caged bird in Jerusalem, his royal city ; the walls I fortified against him and whosoever came out of the gates of the city I turned back." . . . " Hezekiah himself was overwhelmed by the fear of the brightness of my lordship." (Sayce " Records of the Past," Vol. VI., p. 91).

The fright of the people when the Assyrians were at their gates is expressed in a few sentences in chapter xxii., where Isaiah is reviewing the situation. Some were examining the fortifications of the city.

Some of the people try to prepare the city for siege, while some give themselves up to feasting.

" And the horsemen set themselves in array against the gate,
. . . and the enemy drew aside the screen of Judah,
Then ye looked to the armour in the House of the Forest,
And ye saw that the breaches in David's city were many." (Isa. xxii. 7-9.)

Some also seem to have thought destruction at hand and to have despairingly entered into rioting, saying, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

(Isaiah xxii. 13.)

In this crisis messengers were sent to Isaiah, and it is fine to hear him now that he is an old man and has passed through many sorrows with Judah, still sending back the same words that he had spoken as a young man to Ahaz :

Isaiah counsels faith in Yahweh.

"Thus says Yahweh : Be not afraid."

(Isaiah xxxvii. 5.)

This, of course, shows that Isaiah must have been counselling courage and faith in Yahweh all through this period, and must have scorned the idea of surrender.

Hezekiah did not surrender, but he did humiliate himself by sending out to Sennacherib all the treasures that he could collect.* (Read 2 Kings xviii. 15, 16.) The officers of Sennacherib took these gifts and departed, whereupon the people had a jubilee, but Isaiah was filled with shame and grief and calls out—

Hezekiah sends the treasures of the city to Sennacherib.

"What ails thee, then, that all thy people have gone up to the housetops,
Thou who art full of uproar, tumultuous city, joyous town ?
Thy slain are not slain with the sword nor fallen in battle.
All thy chieftains fled together ; without the shooting of a bow they were made prisoners ;
All thine who were seized were together made prisoners though they had fled far away.

The people rejoice at the deliverance they think they have bought for themselves.

But this way of securing victory was really defeat.

* Probably this was the time also when Hezekiah surrendered Padi, King of Ekron. Chaps xxxvi.-xxxix. must have been written some time after the events. They are taken from the Book of Kings (cf. 2 Kings xviii. 9 to xx. 21), but the account of Hezekiah sending tribute to Sennacherib (2 Kings xviii. 15, 16), is omitted.

Therefore I say: Look away from me, let me weep bitterly!
Press not to comfort me for the destruction of my people!" (Isaiah xxii. 1-4.)

Isaiah will not join in the general rejoicing.

This picture of the prophet bowed in grief, refusing to be comforted because his people have needlessly humiliated themselves, is the last one that comes from his own writings. The exact details of what followed are uncertain, but it is clear from the later accounts that the Assyrian army suddenly disappeared from the field in such a way that it seemed a special deliverance by Yahweh and a victory for Isaiah and his party.

The Assyrian army disappears from Palestine.

One account says (xxxvii. 9) that Sennacherib heard that Tirhakah was marching against him; another that the "angel of Yahweh went forth and smote in the camp of the Assyrians" (xxxvii. 36). An Egyptian tradition* says that field mice gnawed the thongs of the bows and devoured the quivers of the army. Sennacherib's account does not claim to have taken the city but only to have carried off heavy booty.

People and king considered that Isaiah had won and an entire change came in their attitude toward him and his message. All entered into the work of reform heartily. Many things which the people had long regarded as sacred, but which Isaiah thought implied a wrong idea of Yahweh, were destroyed; even a brass serpent that was said to come from the days of Moses. The various high places in the towns outside of Jerusalem had been destroyed by Sennacherib's army, and they were not rebuilt.† (Read

King and people consider that Isaiah and Yahweh have won, and all go to work to make Jerusalem holy.

* See Herodotus II., 141.

† There is some question about the date of this reform, since the Book of Kings tells about it before telling of the coming of Sennacherib, but there is nothing to account for such a reform in Hezekiah's early reign, and there is every reason for it after the deliverance.

2 Kings xviii. 3-7.) The feeling grew stronger than ever before that Jerusalem was Yahweh's holy city and there all true Israelites should be holy and righteous. Isaiah, then, had conquered at last. It may not be too much to say that he actually saved Judah to another hundred years of life, for had he not been there, Hezekiah would probably have joined the Egyptian alliance much earlier, or he might have surrendered and Jerusalem would have been destroyed, or at least lost her individuality and belief in her own God and institutions. In that case, the distinctive contribution which the Hebrew race has made to the world would never have been made, for the chief development of the Hebrew religion and its incorporation in the life of the people come in the years following Isaiah, and largely as a result of his work, both as a statesman and a prophet. The essential elements of his early vision—the holiness and supremacy of Yahweh—by interpreting holiness as practical righteousness and supremacy as actual control of the events of his day, he had made a reality in the life of a group of disciples and finally in that of the king and people. He had done this both by letting this ideal ever shine before him like a star and by seeing everything by the light of this star.

The essential elements of the Hebrew religion come into the life of the people for the first time as a result of the work of Isaiah.

MICAH.

SECTION 1

MICAH, THE FARMER.

The word of Yahweh came unto Micah "in the days of Hezekiah,* king of Judah; and he spake to all the people of Judah, saying:

"Zion shall be plowed as a field,
And Jerusalem shall become heaps,
And the mountain of the house
As the high places of a forest." (Jer. xxvi. 18.)

Jerusalem to be destroyed and the temple mount made waste.

According to this, Micah must have been preaching at the same time that Isaiah was, and he must have been a more radical preacher than Isaiah, for he seems to have believed that Jerusalem would fall when the Assyrians came.

Now Micah lived in the little town of Moreshah, or Moresheth-Geth, as he calls it (i. 14, 15.) It must have been near the Philistine city of Gath, but as that has perished, Micah's home cannot be so

Micah's home.

* This passage from Jeremiah gives the date of Micah better than Mic. i. 1, since he has left no work coming from the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz.

definitely fixed as can that of Amos. But it must have been somewhere "between the hill-country of Judah and the Philistine plain," south-west from Jerusalem and directly west, over the hills from Tekoa. But "as the home of Amos is bare and desert, so the home of Micah is fair and fertile. The irregular chalk hills are separated by broad glens, in which the soil is alluvial and red, with room for corn-fields on either side of the perennial, or almost perennial, streams. The olive groves on the braes are finer than either those of the plain below or of the Judæan table-land above. There is herbage for cattle. Bees murmur everywhere, larks are singing, and although to-day you may wander in the maze of hills for hours without meeting a man or seeing a house, you are never out of sight of the traces of ancient habitation, and seldom beyond sound of the human voice—shepherds and ploughmen calling to their flocks and to each other across the glens."*

Micah, then, belonged to the country, to the village life of Judæa. From this standpoint he interpreted the events of which Isaiah was talking in the city.

The first sermon in Micah's book seems to place us in the midst of the exciting days when Sennacherib was drawing near to Palestine to punish the rebellion of Hezekiah. Like Isaiah, Micah considers the coming of Assyria to be the coming of Yahweh in judgment. He cries out:

Yahweh himself is coming in judgment.

"Hear ye, peoples all;
Hearken, O Earth, and her fulness!
That Yahweh may be among you to testify,
The Lord from His holy temple!
For lo! Yahweh goeth forth from his place;
He descendeth and marcheth on the heights of the earth.

All will melt before him.

Molten are the mountains beneath him,
And the valleys gape open,

* G. A. Smith, "Book of the Twelve," Vol. I, pp. 376, 377.

Like wax in face of fire,
Like water poured over a fall.
For the transgression of Jacob is all this,
And for the sins of the house of Israel.
What is the transgression of Jacob ?
Is it not Samaria ?
What is the sin of the house of Judah ?
Is it not Jerusalem ?
Therefore do I turn Samaria into a ruin of a field."
(Micah i. 2-6.)

Transgressions are bringing him.

Samaria had already fallen and Micah sees the same fate approaching Jerusalem. With grief he declares that Jerusalem cannot escape.

" Yea, it hath come unto Judah !
It hath smitten right up to the gate of my people,
Up to Jerusalem." (Micah i. 9. Read i. 6-9.)

The fate which has fallen on Israel is approaching Judah.

Next Micah describes the approach of the Assyrians to the city (Micah i. 10-16). Isaiah has also done this (cf. Isaiah x. 28-32) ; perhaps it was about this time that Isaiah had given his description, and perhaps Micah knew of it. Isaiah pictured the army as coming through the villages to the north of Jerusalem, and finally shaking its " hand at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem." But Micah pictures the Assyrians as approaching from the south-west, and sweeping in their train the quiet villages of his own loved hillsides. Of course it was actually from the south-west that the Assyrian army did approach Jerusalem shortly after this, but Micah's reason for drawing the picture was, probably, his interest in his own country-side. It was as sad to him that these villages should be devastated as that Jerusalem should become a ruin. He named the different towns with a play on words which can be represented in English thus :

As Isaiah had pictured the approach of Assyria through the villages to the north of Jerusalem, Micah pictures it by the way of the villages to the south-west.

Let the village prepare for the trouble that is coming.

"Tell it not in Tell-town;
Weep not in Weep-town;
In the house of Dust roll thyself in the dust," etc.
(Micah i. 10.)

Micah's own town will be possessed by Assyria.

To his own town he said:

"I will bring unto thee
O inhabitant of Moreshah,
Him that shall possess thee." (Micah i. 15.)

From these towns shall go captives to Assyria (Micah i. 16). Within a year these words came true, for Sennacherib carried away the flocks and many of the farmers of this district.

But why did Micah feel that it was right that this destruction should come upon Jerusalem and the villages of Judæa? There can be no doubt about his answer to this question—"the economic wrongs explain and justify the doom impending on the nation."*

"Woe unto them that plan mischief,
And on their beds work out evil!
As soon as morning breaks they put it into execution.
For—it lies to the power of their hands!
They covet fields and—seize them,
Houses and—lift them up,
So they crushed a good man and his home,
A man and his heritage." (Micah ii. 1, 2.)

The powerful nobles seize the lands and houses of the country people.

One cannot help wondering whether some of the powerful nobles of Jersualem had been seizing some of the farm-lands in Micah's district, since he speaks so strongly. It is because the lands of

* G. A. S., p. 389.

Judah are unjustly held that they will be given over to enemies.

" Therefore thus saith Yahweh :
Behold, I am planning evil against this race,
From which ye shall not withdraw your necks,
Nor walk upright ;
For an evil time it is !
In that day shall they raise a taunt-song against you,
And wail out the wailing, and say,
' We be utterly undone :
My people's estate is measured off !
How they take it away from me !
To the rebels our fields are allotted.' "
(Micah ii. 3, 4.)

The land-holders will soon wail because their estates will be handed over to foreigners.

Since the land will belong to outsiders there can never be a redistribution by the congregation of Yahweh (Micah ii. 5.)

At this point Micah is interrupted. Perhaps some one of his listeners cries :

" Prate not, they prate, let none prate of such things !
Revilings will never cease !
O, thou that speakest thus to the house of Jacob,
Is the spirit of Yahweh cut short ?
Or are such his doings ?
Shall not his words mean well with him that walketh uprightly ? " (Micah ii. 6, 7.)

Let the prophet stop his revilings. Surely Yahweh will protect his land and the land-holders are entirely within their rights.

This is " the eternal cry of Respectability : God can mean no harm to the like of us ! His words are good to them that walk uprightly—and we are conscious of being such. What you, prophet, have

charged us with, are nothing but natural transactions." * To such defence Micah answers in the name of Yahweh :

The strong have taken things from those who were going quietly about their affairs.

" But ye are the foes of my people,
Rising against those that are peaceful ;
The mantle ye strip from them that walk quietly by,
Averse to war !
Women of my people ye tear from their happy homes,

Women and children have been treated unfairly. Such conduct can bring only destruction.

From their children ye take my glory for ever.
Rise and begone—for this is no resting-place !
Because of the uncleanness that bringeth destruction,
Destruction incurable." (Micah ii. 8-10.)

The only kind of a prophet that would suit such a people would be one " whose walk is wind and falsehood."† (Micah ii. 11.)

Of course we do not know where Micah preached, whether in his own country town or in Jerusalem, but probably in both places. What follows seems like an address that he spoke in Jerusalem to the rulers :

The rulers of Jacob ought to know justice, but they hate good.

" Hear now, O chiefs of Jacob,
And rulers of the house of Israel :
Is it not yours to know justice ?
Haters of good and lovers of evil,
Tearing their hide from upon them
(*He points to the people*)

The rulers are living upon the work of the poor.

And their flesh from the bones of them ;
And their hide they have stripped from them
And their bones have they cleft,

* G. A. S., p. 391.

† Vs. 12 and 13 have been inserted by an editor after the exile.

And served it up as if from a pot,
Like meat from the thick of the caldron!
At that time shall they cry to Yahweh
—And he will not answer them;
—But hide his face from them at that time,
Because they have aggravated their deeds."
(Micah iii. 1-4).

Yahweh cannot let his face shine upon the unjust.

A more terrible charge against rulers it would be difficult to imagine. Not only have they cared little for the happiness and welfare of the peasants of Judah, but they have exploited them for their own gain. Not only have they grabbed the land, but in other ways also have they sapped the very life of the people as completely as if they had boiled them in a caldron and served them up as food. Surely it is only just that Yahweh should not answer such when they call on him for mercy, for his worshippers must first of all be just.

Nor does Micah spare the prophets who consider themselves the religious leaders. Hirelings he calls them, who will do nothing except for money.

"Thus saith Yahweh against the prophets who lead my people astray,
Who, while they have aught between their teeth, proclaim peace,
But against him who will not lay to their mouths they sanctify war!
Wherefore night shall be yours without vision,
And yours shall be darkness without divination;
And the sun shall go down on the prophets,
And the day shall darken about them;
And the seers shall be put to the blush,
And the diviners be ashamed:
All of them shall cover the beard,
For there shall be no answer from God."
(Micah iii. 5-7.)

The prophets bespeak fair things for those who give them food.

Such prophets can usher in only a period of darkness.

In contrast to these time-servers Micah puts himself:

Micah's definition of a prophet.

"But I—I am full of power by the spirit of Yahweh
and justice and might,
To declare to Jacob his transgressions and to Israel
his sin." (Micah iii. 8.)

This is Micah's definition of a prophet—one who has a passion for justice and who is courageous, by the power of the spirit of God, to point out where the life about him fails to be just. His claim to be such a prophet seems substantiated by the courage in his next declaration :

Jerusalem is built on crime, not on justice.

Her rulers, prophets and priests care only for money.

Yet they claim that Yahweh is with them.

Therefore Jerusalem must be destroyed in order that they may know that only a city founded on justice can have Yahweh in its midst.

"Hear now this, O chiefs of the house of Jacob,
And rulers of the house of Israel,
Who spurn justice and twist all that is straight,
Building Zion in blood, and Jerusalem with crime!
Her chiefs give judgment for a bribe,
And her priests oracles for a reward,
And her prophets divine for silver;
And on Yahweh they lean, saying:
'Is not Yahweh in the midst of us?
Evil cannot come at us.'
Therefore for your sakes shall Zion be ploughed
like a field,
And Jerusalem become heaps,
And the Mount of the House mounds in a jungle."
(Micah iii. 9-12.)

Micah, then, preached that Jerusalem would fall, and at the same time Isaiah was saying that Jerusalem would not fall, though the country would be devastated. Events, of course, justified Isaiah's expectations, when Sennacherib suddenly disappeared from the field. But while the two prophets seem to disagree as to the coming of events, they did thoroughly agree in their main position that only a city

organized on the principle of justice could stand. Micah was more impressed with certain evils than Isaiah, especially the unfair distribution of the land and the greed of the officials. Micah was the Amos of Judah; he felt that the violation of justice in Jerusalem could be punishable only with death. Isaiah had a wider outlook, but Micah's absolute belief in the principle of justice will make his message always of value.

SECTION II.

A LATER WORD FROM MICAH.

After the period of success to Isaiah and his party there came a reaction. The reforms carried out by Hezekiah and Isaiah offended a good many of the people, who had not really understood Isaiah's principles, but who had joined in the general reform-wave because it was popular. No sooner had "Hezekiah slept with his fathers" than these reactionary elements came to the front. They gained control of the new king, Manasseh, who came to the throne when only twelve years of age. He rebuilt the high places in the Judæan villages which Hezekiah had destroyed, or, at least, had not rebuilt again after their destruction by Sennacherib. Of course it was natural for some of the people to ask what right Hezekiah and Isaiah had to expect everyone to come up to Jerusalem and worship? Certainly their fathers had worshipped Yahweh at the high places in their own towns, and no one had thought it wrong. It

Reaction under Manasseh.

therefore seemed a good thing to restore the old high places. But Manasseh also brought back many of the old foreign elements. He built altars to Baal and brought back the worship of the sun, moon and stars, and various superstitions. (Read 2 Kings xxi. 1-7.)

Massacre of the prophetic party.

Worse than all, he put to death the prophets and any who stood by the principles of Isaiah and Micah. He made the streets of Jerusalem red with the blood of these reformers. (2 Kings xxi. 16.) Isaiah's "holy remnant" was thus compelled to pass through a terrible ordeal and it is not at all impossible that Isaiah himself lived until this time and suffered death with his disciples.

Some passages from the Book of Micah seem to come from this terrible period.

Evil men have complete control.

"The godly man is perished out of the earth,
And there is none upright among men.
They all lie in wait for blood;
They hunt every man his brother with a net—
Their hands are upon that which is evil to do it diligently,
The prince asketh, and the judge is ready for a reward;
The great man, he uttereth the mischief of his soul:
Thus they weave it together.
The best of them is as a brier:
The most upright is worse than a thorn hedge."
(Micah vii. 2-4.)

The Book of Kings speaks of a prophet who prophesied the downfall of Jerusalem and represented Yahweh as saying:

Micah renews his prophecy of the coming destruction of Jerusalem.

"I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish,
Wiping it and turning it upside down."
(2 Kings xxi. 13.)

May this have been Micah still repeating his message concerning the destruction of Jerusalem? Had he lived through the deliverance of Jerusalem and the reforms, and come to see that his message, after all, would be fulfilled, since the reforms had not been permanent?

There is a passage in Micah which sets forth the original emphasis of Micah on justice, which may be his way of giving his earlier message in this later period. Certainly it is one of the finest passages in the Old Testament

"Hear ye now that which Yahweh is saying;
Arise, contend before the mountains,
And let the hills hear thy voice!
Hear, O mountains, the Lord's Argument,
And ye, the everlasting! foundations of earth!
Yahweh hath a quarrel with his People,
And with Israel he cometh to argue.

Mountains and hills are called as witnesses to Yahweh's argument with Judah.

"My people what have I done unto thee?
And how have I wearied thee—answer me!
For I brought thee up from the land of Misraim,*
And from the house of slavery I redeemed thee.
I sent before thee Moses, Aaron and Miriam.
My people remember now what Balak,† king of Moab counselled,
And how he was answered by Balaam, Beor's son—
So that thou mayst know the righteous deeds of Yahweh.

The kindness and care which Yahweh bestowed on Israel in the early days ought to make her understand his righteous deeds.

"Wherewithal shall I come before Yahweh,
Shall I bow myself to God, the most High?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
With calves of one year?

* Egypt.

† Cf. Numbers xxiii. and xxiv.

No amount of offering, not even the sacrifice of the first-born son, is sufficient to please Yahweh.

Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams?
With myriads of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my first born for a guilt-offering?
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

The requirements of Yahweh.

"He hath shown thee, O man, what is good,
And what is Yahweh seeking from thee,
But to do justice and love mercy,
And humbly to walk with thy God?"
(Micah vi. 1-8.)

Micah's definition of religion.

This is generally pointed out as the best definition of religion in the Old Testament, and perhaps that is not too much to claim for it as a set definition. It includes what may be called both the practical and the ideal elements of religion, the relation of the individual to others and to God. Toward others one should show not only perfect justice, but mercy—brotherliness; toward God, humility and faith in his guidance. Micah certainly did not have the insight into the spiritual nature of religion which Jeremiah and the prophets after the exile had, but he had a remarkable view for his time.

The future.

Did he have any ideal picture of the future? Micah v. 1-6 may come from the last part of Micah's life. Here an ideal king is pictured in terms that reflect the words of Isaiah about the child to be born to become King. He is to overcome the Assyrians and bring peace and prosperity. Moreover, he is to come from the little town of Bethlehem. Perhaps Micah thought Jerusalem would not be rebuilt again, and life in the future would be simpler, more like the village life he had known and loved.

ZEPHANIAH.

SECTION I.

ZEPHANIAH.

ZEPHANIAH was the great-great-grandson of Hezekiah, the king (Zeph. i. 1). As a boy he had heard over and over again the stories of those splendid days when Isaiah had preached his great sermons, when Yahweh had delivered Jerusalem from the hand of the Assyrians and Hezekiah had made Jerusalem a city holy to Yahweh only. Of course he knew, too, about the terrible days when many of Judah's best citizens were slain, and how ever since then those who believed Yahweh to be the holy God whose glory fills all the earth, as Isaiah had said, had been forced to keep themselves hidden. Even Zephaniah's own name, meaning, *Yahweh hath hidden*, was a memorial of the dark days through which the "remnant" had passed and were still passing.

As Zephaniah grew to manhood, he brooded over the strange state of affairs. As he walked the streets of Jerusalem he saw altars to Baal and many signs that the city was not holy to Yahweh. Foreign priests and foreign fashions of all sorts could everywhere be seen. At twilight hosts of people could be seen on their house-tops bowing to the setting sun or the

rising moon and the stars. Could it be, he must often have asked himself, that the God who had delivered Jerusalem from Assyria would allow much longer this pollution of his city? As he brooded thus he seemed to hear the voice of Yahweh saying:

Yahweh will vindicate his power by sweeping man and beast off the face of the earth.

"I will sweep, sweep away everything from the face of the ground—oracle of Yahweh—sweep man and beast, sweep the fowl of the heaven and the fish of the sea, and I will bring to ruin the wicked and cut off the men of wickedness from the ground—oracle of Yahweh.

The foreign gods, their priests and worshippers will be cut off.

"And I will stretch forth my hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off from this place the names of the Baalim, the names of the priestlings with the priests, and them who upon the house-tops bow themselves to the host of heaven, and them who worship Yahweh and swear by Moloch,* and them who have turned from following Yahweh, and who do not seek Yahweh nor have inquired of him." (Zeph. i. 2-6.)

No doubt this belief that widespread destruction must certainly come was partly a result of the young man's brooding over the wrong about him and his powerlessness to change conditions. The whole current of things seemed against him. What could he do? The only thing possible seemed to declare to the people his condemnation of their life and warn them of the destruction that must surely come?

It was probably still dangerous for a prophet to lift up his voice, but a new hope had lately risen in the hearts of steadfast Yahweh worshippers, because a new king had come to the throne of Judah. Josiah became king when only eight years old, but as he was

* This differs slightly from G. A. Smith's translation. Cf. "Book of Twelve," vol. ii., p. 57, apparently there were three classes of people: 1. Those who worshipped Yahweh and other gods also; (2) Those who were once Yahweh worshippers, but who had forsaken him; (3) Those who had grown up without learning to worship Yahweh at all.

growing to manhood he seemed more interested in the things of Yahweh than his father and grandfather had been. (Read Zeph. i. 1 and 2 Kings xxii. 1, 2.) Who could tell? Perhaps this young king might be aroused to purify Jerusalem? So Zephaniah lifted up his voice in strong accents:

"Silence for the Lord Yahweh!
For near is Yahweh's Day.
Yahweh hath prepared a slaughter,
He has consecrated His guests.

The Day of Yahweh is drawing nigh.

"And it shall be in Yahweh's day of slaughter that I will make visitation upon the princes and the house of the king, and upon all who array themselves in foreign raiment; and I will make visitation upon all who leap over the threshold on that day, who fill their lord's house full of violence and frauds.

It will be a day of destruction.

"And on that day—oracle of Yahweh—there shall be a noise of crying from the Fishgate,* and wailing from the Fishgate, and wailing from the Misneh,† and great havoc on the Heights.‡

"Howl, O dwellers in the mortar, ||
For undone are all the merchant folk,
Cut off are all the money dealers.

"And in that time it shall be, that I will search Jerusalem with lanterns, and make visitations upon the men who are become stagnant upon their lees, who in their hearts say, Yahweh doeth no good and

Yahweh will search Jerusalem with lanterns to find those who disregard him.

* Fishgate was probably the gate by which people from Tyre entered Jerusalem to sell fish. Cf. Neh. iii. 3, and xiii. 16.

† The second or new quarter of the city. Cf. II K. xxii. 14.

‡ Perhaps a fashionable part of the city, built out on the heights.

|| The valley between the eastern and western hills on which the city is built.

doeth no evil. Their substance shall be for spoil, and their houses for wasting.

"A day of wrath is that day."

"Near is the great Day of Yahweh,
Near and very speedy,
Hark, the Day of Yahweh!
A strong man—there!—crying bitterly!

"A day of wrath is that day,
Day of siege and blockade,
Day of stress and distress,
Day of darkness and murk,
Day of cloud and heavy mist,
Day of war-horn and battle roar.

"And I will beleaguer men, and they shall walk like blind, for they have sinned against Yahweh; and poured out shall their blood be like dust, and the flesh of them like dung. Even their silver, even their gold shall not avail to save them in the day of Yahweh's wrath, and in the fire of His zeal shall all the earth be devoured, for destruction, yea, sudden collapse shall he make of all the inhabitants of the earth." (Zeph. i. 7-18.)

To this picture of coming doom Zephaniah adds hope of escape on one condition—that of becoming just and righteous.

The meek and the righteous may escape.

"Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together,
O people not abashed! before that ye become as drifting chaff,
Before the anger of Yahweh come upon you,
Before there come upon you the day of Yahweh's wrath;
Seek Yahweh, all ye meek of the earth who do his ordinance,
Seek righteousness, seek meekness,
Peradventure ye may hide yourselves
In the day of Yahweh's wrath." (Zeph. ii. 1-3.)

Next comes a more detailed description of the coming of the judgment upon various cities. (Read ii. 4-6.*) Especially interesting is the description of the future desolation of Nineveh, since in a few years it was utterly destroyed and has never been rebuilt. Zephaniah put it into the regular elegiac metre :

" And may he stretch out his hand against the north,
And destroy Asshur ;
And may he turn Nineveh to desolation,
Dry as the desert.
And herds shall couch in her midst,
Every beast [of the earth]
Yea, pelican and bittern shall roost on the capitals ;
The owl shall hoot in the window,
The raven on the doorstep.

" Such is the city the jubilant,
She that sitteth at ease,
She that saith in her heart, I am,
And there is none else !
How hath she became desolation !
A lair of beasts.
Everyone passing by her hisses,
Shakes his hand." (Zeph. ii. 13-15.)

But Zephaniah had studied his Isaiah well, and he also thought that plowing was for the purpose of sowing, that destruction was for the purpose of rebuilding. Since Jerusalem's princes are " roaring lions " and her judges " ravening wolves," since her prophets are " treacherous persons " and her priests unholy, destruction must come. But this is for the purpose of selecting those who can become the foundation of a new state, in which iniquity and falsehood cannot be found. (Read Zeph. iii. 1-13, except verses 9, 10. Cf. Isaiah iv. 2-4.)

* Probably ii. 7-11 were added by a later hand.

"In that day thou shalt not be ashamed of all thy deeds, by which thou hast rebelled against me; for then will I turn out of the midst of thee all who exult with that arrogance of thine, and thou wilt not again vaunt thyself upon the Mount of my Holiness.

"But I will leave in thy midst a people humble and poor, and they shall trust in the name of Yahweh. The remnant of Israel shall do no evil, and shall not speak falsehood, and no fraud shall be found in their mouth, but they shall couch, with none to make them afraid." (Zeph. iii. 11-13.)

The "Remnant" shall make a new holy state.

JEREMIAH.*

SECTION I.

THE RISE OF JEREMIAH.

Another young prophet, who came to the front, encouraged, perhaps, by the presence on the throne of the young King Josiah, was Jeremiah. In the thirteenth year of Josiah the word of Yahweh came to him (Jer. i. 2). He lived in the little town of Anathoth, three miles north-west of Jerusalem, and it was there that he felt that Yahweh called him to his prophetic work.

* Jer. xxxvi. tells us what we know about the writing of the Book of Jeremiah. We learn that Jeremiah himself first wrote a book in the latter part of his ministry, that this was destroyed by the king, and re-written by Baruch. He probably was the editor of the main part of the book. Like other prophetic books the sermons, etc., are not arranged chronologically; fragments must be dated by historical references which they contain, but these are more difficult to ascertain than in other books. This treatment considers that the early sermons about a foe from the north refer to the Scythians, and the later ones refer to the Babylonians. It takes sections from anywhere in the book, and arranges them in the historical period to which they seem to refer.

Jeremiah's call is unique in that he feels that even before his birth he was designed as a prophet (i. 5). Probably this means that his parents were godly people and from earliest childhood they had led him to feel that his was a holy life. His father was Hilkiah one of the priests of Anathoth (i. 1). Jeremiah was scarcely more than a boy when he felt the call to Yahweh's work. He replies :

Jeremiah's call.

" Oh, Lord Yahweh, behold, I cannot speak : for I am a child " (i. 6).

And Yahweh said :

" Say not, I am a child ; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak " (i. 7).

The consciousness that Yahweh was present and was imparting to him power to do his work is expressed thus by Jeremiah :

" Then Yahweh put forth his hand and touched my mouth. And Yahweh said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms to pluck up and to break down, and to destroy and to pull down ; to build, and to plant." * (i. 9, 10.)

His work will be the destruction of some things and building up of others.

This would indicate that Jeremiah's work would be both negative and positive ; some things he would tear down, some things he would build up. His first work was in reference to tearing down. The word of Yahweh came to him saying,

" What seest thou ? "

Jeremiah replied :

The young prophet first sees evil approaching from the north.

" I see a boiling caldron ; and the face thereof is from the north."

* Of course Jeremiah did not write this account of his call until after he had been working many years and the account is coloured by his later experience as Isa. vi. is by Isaiah's experience. Verses 11 and 12 have been omitted here, because they, with 16-19, seem to be another account of a call.

Then Yahweh said :

"Out of the north will the evil break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land. For, behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith Yahweh, and they shall come, and they shall set everyone his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will utter my judgments against them because of all their wickedness ; in that they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the work of their own hands." (i. 14-16.)

These enemies will overcome Judah and Jerusalem.

This caldron, with trouble brewing in it from the north, what is it ? The rest of the description shows that Jeremiah means that an army will come from the north. He never names this enemy from the north, but they were undoubtedly the Scythians, who Herodotus says at this time had overrun the kingdom of the Medes, and every one was in terror lest they should come into Palestine. They were barbarous tribes from the region of the Caucasus Mountains. Herodotus says : "Their insolence and oppression spread ruin on every side." "They scoured the country and plundered everyone of whatever they could." (Her. i. 106.)

The Scythians were spreading terror everywhere.

As Jeremiah looked around to see what his first message was to be, he heard the rumours of the coming of these Scythian hordes. Like Zephaniah he was deeply impressed with the terrible state of Judah. Having massacred the prophets and introduced and maintained foreign worship, what else did she deserve from Yahweh but death ? And here were barbaric hordes as fitting instruments to accomplish it. With this knowledge came the vision of the boiling caldron. Therefore Jeremiah starts out with his first message, proclaiming it probably in the market place or wherever he could find people.

Sound the alarm.

"Blow ye the trumpet in the land,
Cry with a loud voice,
Assemble yourselves and let us go,
Into the fortified cities.

Prepare for safety.

"Lift the standard towards Zion,
Flee, stay not.
For evil comes from the north,
And a great destruction.

The enemy is coming.

"A lion is gone up from his thicket,
And a destroyer of nations,
He starts forth, comes from his place,
The world to lay waste.

The doom is from Yahweh.

"For this gird you with sackcloth,
Wail and howl,
For it will not turn back from us,
The fierce anger of Yahweh." (Jer. iv. 5-8.)

The swiftness of the coming enemy he describes graphically:

The enemy is swift.

"Behold, he cometh up as clouds,
And his chariots are as a whirlwind.
His horses are swifter than eagles;
Woe unto us! for we are spoiled." (Jer. iv. 13.)

Jeremiah gives his message earnestly and fully.

How earnestly Jeremiah threw himself into the delivery of this first message, how he groaned with the pain that such a message must bring, how he pointed out the wrongs in Judah as the reason for the coming disaster everyone must see who reads his early sermons. (Read carefully ch. iv. 5—vi. 30.)

What of the Scythians? Did they come down upon Judah as Zephaniah and Jeremiah expected? Very little is known of their movements, but Herodotus makes the following statement:

"They [the Scythians] marched forward with the design of invading Egypt. When they had reached Palestine, however, Psammetichus, the Egyptian king, met them with gifts and prayers, and prevailed on them to advance no further. On their return, passing through Ciscalon, a city of Syria, the greater part of them went their way without doing any damage; but some of them who lagged behind pillaged the temple of Celestial Venus." (Her. i. 105.)

The Scythians did not touch Judah.

Apparently then, the Scythians did not touch Judah at all; they moved along the coast and did very little harm there. Was Jeremiah's message then of value? Yes, the moral issues he raised were just as true as if the outer events had happened exactly as he expected. It was no extraordinary knowledge of future events that made him a prophet, but the valuation of all things according to moral standards. The tentative forecasting of the future on these principles was natural. But Jeremiah himself learned from this failure of his expectations to come true, that the word of Yahweh nevertheless stood sure.

The value of Jeremiah's message lay in the moral issues, not in his forecasts of the future.

SECTION II.

A SECOND CALL.*

Some years must have passed after Jeremiah's early message concerning the coming of the Scythians before he took up his work again. The Scythians had come and gone. His fellow-townsmen had no doubt

Jeremiah faces the fact that his expectation of the coming of the Scythians had not been fulfilled.

* It is possible that the whole of ch. i. is about Jeremiah's early call, but it has been treated as two here, because there seem to be two complete calls.

called him a false alarmist. What did it all mean? Was Yahweh unmindful of the sins of Judah? Had he no regard for the words which he had seemed to put into the mouth of his prophets? While wrestling with such questions and doubts a new vision came to Jeremiah.

A message from Yahweh through an almond tree.

It was, perhaps, as he was walking out in the fields, with his mind engrossed in the problems concerning Yahweh and Judah that his attention was arrested by an almond tree. The almond is the first thing to bud in the spring in Palestine. Perhaps this was in the spring time and it was the budding of the almond that called Jeremiah's mind for the moment away from his darker thoughts. As he looked at the tree and mechanically repeated its name—shaked, shaked—suddenly light came to him; shakad means to keep watch. Was not Yahweh keeping watch? Was he not guiding and guarding affairs even though he sometimes seemed far away, even though he had seemed to leave his word for the time being unfulfilled? Yes, Yahweh himself was true and his laws of righteousness were true whatever else failed or seemed to fail. To be sure, he did things neither so quickly nor in the same way as men expected. But why should he, since he is far greater than men and has in view larger issues? But he is watchful always.

Yahweh's word is always true, though he may not fulfil it exactly when and how his servants expect.

So Jeremiah felt that God spoke to him from the almond tree, and in after years he told about it thus:

Jeremiah's account of his second call.

"The word of Yahweh came unto me, saying.

"'What seest thou, Jeremiah?'

"And I said,

"'I see an almond tree [Heb. shaked].'

"Then said Yahweh unto me,

"'Thou hast well seen; for I am watchful [Heb. shaked] over my word to perform it.'"

This experience was in a sense a second call to Jeremiah. The renewed consciousness of Yahweh's presence and power could have but one issue for Jeremiah—the renewal of his work. It was clear that in the face of all opposition he must stand for Yahweh and his principles. This, therefore, was part of the message that came from Yahweh through the almond tree :

" And thou, gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them, all that I command thee : Be not dismayed at them lest I dismay thee before them.

" And I, behold, I make thee this day a fortified city, and an iron pillar, and a bronze wall, against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee ; but they shall not prevail against thee ; for I am with thee," saith Yahweh, " to deliver thee." (Jer. i. 17-19.)

The prophet is to stand immovable before all opposition and deliver Yahweh's messages.

It was with courage and determination, ready for all opposition, that Jeremiah set about his work again. But it was with a sweeter message that Jeremiah came this time. He had grown older and wiser, and had learned more of the spiritual character of Yahweh. Perhaps it was now for the first time that Jeremiah understood the prophet Hosea. At least it is Hosea's message of the early and continuous love of Yahweh that he now brings :

" I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth,
The love of thy bridal days,
How thou didst follow after me in the wilderness,
In a land that was not sown.

Yahweh loved Israel in her youth.

" Israel was holiness unto Yahweh,
The first fruits of his produce :
All that devoured him were held guilty ;
Evil came upon them." (Jer. ii. 2-3).

He protected her against her enemies.

But in spite of this early love between Yahweh and Judah there is now estrangement, for Judah has been untrue and "loved strangers" (ii. 25.) Although Yahweh led them into a bountiful land they have chosen other gods. They have forsaken Yahweh, who is "the fountain of living waters," although the gods they have chosen instead are but "broken cisterns that can hold no water" (ii. 4-13). They have bowed themselves upon "every high hill and under every green tree" (ii. 20), worshipping the Baals of the land.

Why does Judah complain to Yahweh when she is the unfaithful one?

"Why do you complain unto me?
You are all godless;
Yea, you are untrue to me,
Saith Yahweh.

All hardships that Yahweh sends are to make Judah again faithful.

"In vain have I smitten your children,
They have received no correction:
Your own sword hath devoured your prophets,
Like a destroying lion.

Because the people themselves roam away Yahweh seems far away.

"Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?
Or a land of thick darkness?
Why say my people: 'We roam freely,
We will come no more to thee.'

The people do not seem to care as much for Yahweh as a maid does for her ornaments.

"Can a maid forget her ornaments,
Or a bride her girdle?
Yet my people have forgotten me;
Days without number." (ii. 29-32.)

Like Hosea, Jeremiah blends the two figures of Yahweh as father and as husband to Judah.

Yahweh planned beautiful things for Judah.

"But I, I thought:
How I will treat thee as a son,
"And give thee a pleasant land,
The most beautiful heritage.

" And I thought, thou wilt call me my father,
And will not turn away from me.
" But as a woman is untrue to her lover,
So hast thou been untrue to me." (iii. 19, 20.)

Yahweh thought Judah would gladly turn to him, but she has proved untrue.

In spite of Judah's unfaithfulness, Yahweh is waiting and hoping for her return. Jeremiah draws the picture of Judah repenting and returning to Yahweh with the hope that it might inspire some to turn to him.

" A voice is heard from the bare heights,
The weeping of supplications,
Because they have perverted their way,
They have forgotten Yahweh, their God.

May not Yahweh yet hear Judah weeping for her sins ?

" Return, O back-sliding children,
I will heal your back-sliding.
Behold, we are come unto thee ;
For thou art Yahweh, our God." (Jer. iii. 21-23.)
(Read Jer. ii. 1—iv. 1, except iii. 14-18.)

Yahweh stands ready to receive Judah when she returns.

Perhaps it was some time in this period that there was a drought in Judah, and Jeremiah pleads with Yahweh to show mercy (xiv. 7-9). He excuses the people because false prophets have led them astray. Yahweh, however, replies that Judah cannot be saved in her present condition. Jeremiah rebels because he sees that he must keep on proclaiming Judah's fate. It would be better never to have been born than be compelled to do such a work (xv. 10). However, he feels that Yahweh strengthens him and shows him that if he will separate the bad fom the good in his own life, letting only the good grow strong, he will be triumphant in the end.

Jeremiah pleads for Judah in time of drought.

Jeremiah rebels against delivering the message of Judah's doom.

" If thou bringest out the precious from the common, thou shalt be as my mouth : they may return unto

Yahweh shows him that the weaker elements of his own character must be purged away.

thee; but thou shalt not return unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fortified wall of bronze." (Read Jer. xiv. and xv.)

Jeremiah must tell Judah that unless her life is purified doom awaits her.

The rest of Jeremiah's story shows the process by which his life was sifted and purified. He has times of despair, but conquers them. He sees, now, that the nature of his work will call for a sacrifice. He must never think of having a home of his own (Jer. xvi. 1), but he must give himself entirely to the proclamation of Judah's coming doom unless she changes her life and also separates the "precious from the vile."

SECTION III.

THE GREAT REFORM.

The finding of the Book of Instruction in the temple.

In the eighteenth year of the young king Josiah occurred an event of great importance—the finding of the "Book of Instruction" (2 Kings xxii. 8.) The king had been for some time repairing the temple, and one day he sent Shaphan, his secretary, to look after the money in the collection boxes and the paying of the workmen. There Hilkiah, the priest, told Shaphan that he had found the Book of Instruction in the House of Yahweh, that is, in the inner part of the temple. Shaphan read the book and was deeply impressed by it. He went back to report to the king, and took the book along. After reporting that they had "emptied out the money found in the house" and had "delivered it unto the hand of the workmen," he added, "Hilkiah, the priest, hath delivered me a book." Then he read it through again to the king,

The reading of the book to the king.

who " rent his clothes " in consternation because he and the people were violating it. He asked that steps be taken at once to find out the mind of Yahweh concerning the book. A delegation was sent to Huldah, a prophetess. They read the book to her and she declared that it truly contained the words of Yahweh. As soon as possible the people were called together, " both small and great, and he read in their ears all the words of the book." " The king stood by the pillar, and made a covenant before Yahweh, to walk after Yahweh, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, with all his soul, to confirm the words of this covenant that were written in this book; and all the people stood to the covenant." (2 Kings. xxiii 1-3.)

Huldah, the prophetess, declares that it is a book of Yahweh.

A mass meeting.

King and people pledge loyalty to the book.

All this created an entirely new situation in Judah for Jeremiah to consider. It seems rather strange that the king did not send the new-found book to Jeremiah at first, rather than to Huldah. Perhaps Jeremiah was not in Jerusalem, or perhaps he had not yet been widely recognised as a prophet. But the King Josiah would now want young men to help him in making the new law known and in enforcing it. Jeremiah was one of the group of young men who set to work to help the king in the reforms. Immediately after the reading of the law by the king the people in their zeal had gone to the temple and destroyed various idolatrous objects of worship, but, of course, there was much more work to be done. Jeremiah seems to have given himself to educating public opinion in favour of the law. Only a few of his sermons are extant, but they, no doubt, represent his general work.

Jeremiah joins the group of workers for the new law.

Reform begins at once in Jerusalem.

" The word that came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, saying,

" Hear thou the words of this covenant, and speak them unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and say unto them,

Jeremiah preaches for the new law.

"Thus saith Yahweh, the God of Israel: cursed be the man that heareth not the words of this covenant, which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the iron furnace, saying,

"Hearken unto my voice, and do according to all that I command you, and ye shall be to me a people, and I will be to you a god; that I may establish the oath which I sware unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as at this day.

"And I answered and said, Amen, O Yahweh." (Jer. xi. 1-5. Read also xi. 6-8.)

The book was part of the Book of Deuteronomy.

These words sound like the Book of Deuteronomy. Of course, it was the main body of our book of Deuteronomy that Hilkiah found in the temple. It could not have been a very old book. They had no difficulty in reading it. It was probably shorter than our present Deuteronomy; they read it through three times on the day it was found. No doubt it contained old material, but it was all re-written in the style of the prophets, and it breathed the spirit of Isaiah. It must have been written by some of the disciples of Isaiah, possibly during the persecutions of Manasseh. Some of its orations are powerful and must have stirred the young men who went out to advocate the law. Jeremiah uses its phrases; he has given himself heart and soul to the work with the young king.

The new law said that Yahweh must be worshipped in Jerusalem only.

One thing which this new-found book enjoined was that Yahweh should be worshipped at one sanctuary only—at Jerusalem. (Read Deut. xii. 13, 14.) Isaiah and Hezekiah had begun this work and to the prophetic party it had become more and more clear that this was the only way to reform the religion of Judah. There were so many heathen superstitions connected with the High Places in the villages that the only way to root them out was to forbid people to worship Yahweh there at all.

A great feast held.

In Jerusalem this feature of the reform was not so difficult to enforce. A great feast was held and people entered into the work of reform heartily. (Read 2 Kings xxiii. 21-25.) But in the country districts the reform was more difficult. To destroy the High Place in the village and displace the priests there, to allow people to offer sacrifice only after taking a journey to Jerusalem seemed to many altogether too revolutionary. Jeremiah had these difficulties to meet in his own home town. The people of Anathoth were so enraged that they planned to kill Jeremiah. They seemed to think him responsible for the enforcement of the law in Anathoth, for they said :

Jeremiah incurs danger in Anathoth because of his advocacy of th law.

The people of Anathoth plan to kill Jeremiah.

" Let us destroy the tree with its sap thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name may be no more remembered." (Jer. xi. 19).

Jeremiah almost fell into their trap. He says :

Jeremiah is not suspicious.

" I was like a tame lamb that is led to the slaughter ; and I knew not that they devised devices against me." (xi. 19).

He discovers the plot in time.

However, it became known to him for he says,

" Yahweh caused me to know." (xi. 18)

Prays for vengeance on his enemies.

Then Jeremiah in pain and perhaps anger prays Yahweh to bring vengeance upon them, and believed that he received answer that Anathoth should be visited by penalties of various kinds. (Read Jer. xi. 20-23).

Complains of the prosperity of the wicked.

Moreover, Jeremiah complains still more bitterly about the general prosperity of the wicked. Perhaps for the first time in Hebrew literature Job's question was raised, Why do the wicked prosper ? Jeremiah boldly blames Yahweh for their prosperity.

" Thou plantest them, yea, they take root ; they spread, yea, they bring forth fruit." (Read Jer. xii. 1-4).

To this Yahweh replies :

Sees that these troubles are small in comparison to those that will come.

" If thou hast run with footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how wilt thou vie with horses ? " (xii. 5). Already Jeremiah seems to have forgotten that he is to be " an iron pillar and a brazen wall " against all opposition. At the very beginning of the journey, when he is plodding along with footmen he is weary ; of what value will he be when harder things come ? Now he is in a land of peace in comparison to the jungle of events in which he will later find himself involved. Since his own family and town have turned against him what hardships may he not expect ? (Read Jer. xii. 5, 6.)

Sees the folly of complaining and bemoaning hardships.

No doubt this passage means that Jeremiah faces the the whole situation here, and even while he complains recognises the weakness and folly of such complaint, and braces himself up for more difficult situations. Jeremiah, more than any other prophet, has left the record of his inner struggles, lets his readers see the rounds of the ladder by which he climbed to his view of truth.

Death of Josiah.

The progress of reform in Judah was stayed by a tragedy. Pharaoh-necoh, King of Egypt, decided to march north through Palestine ; Josiah went out to stop him and was killed in the battle of Megiddo (2 Kings xxiii). The grief of the people seemed universal and sincere. Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, was on the throne only a short time when he was summoned to Egypt and there put in chains. Jeremiah refers to the fate of these two kings thus :

Imprisonment of Jehoahaz.

" Weep not for the dead, neither bemoan him ; but weep sore for him that goeth away." (Jer. xxii. 10, 16.)

SECTION IV.

THE TEMPLE DISCOURSE.

Fall of Nineveh. Victorious Babylonians march toward Palestine.

It was in the year 606 B.C., when Jehoiakim was king in Judah, that great Nineveh fell before the Babylonians, who then turned their faces westward toward the lands where the Assyrians had gathered such rich tribute for so many years. In the year 605 Nebuchadnezzar marched toward Syria.

In Judah people were not greatly frightened, because they remembered the days of Isaiah, who had declared and demonstrated that Yahweh would protect his temple. Surely now no harm could come to Jerusalem! But Jeremiah sees things differently. The reform and the adoption of the law-book had not made people truly righteous. They claim to be wise, to have the law, but in giving such an important place to this law, they have rejected the true "word of Yahweh."

The adoption of the law-book has not made people righteous.

"Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the swift and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the ordinance of Yahweh.

"How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of Yahweh is with us?

"But surely, behold, the false pen of the scribes hath wrought falsely. The wise men are put to shame, they are dismayed and taken:

People have substituted th book for the word of Yahweh in their hearts.

"Lo, they have rejected the word of Yahweh; and what manner of wisdom have they?" (Jer. viii. 7-9.)

Their manner of wisdom was formal—the things commanded in the book, and the dogma of the inviolability of the temple handed down from Isaiah,

were the things they are depending on rather than any "word of Yahweh" that might come to them. Therefore Jeremiah felt called to protest against their religion.

Going to the temple, probably at a time when people were going there for special services perhaps arranged because of the coming of the Babylonians, Jeremiah stood in the gate and cried out:

The temple sermon.

"Thus saith Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Trust ye not in lying words, saying,

Isaiah's doctrine of the inviolability of the temple has become a snare to this age.

"'The temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh, the temple of Yahweh, are these.' For if ye thoroughly amend your ways, and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour, if ye oppress not the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your own hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers from of old and even for evermore. Will ye steal, murder and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye have not known; and come and stand before me in this house, over which my name has been called, and say,

Yahweh will not preserve either his temple or his people unless they are righteous.

'We are delivered,'

The people's hopes of deliverance are false unless they amend their ways.

in order (forsooth) to do all these abominations? Is this house, over which my name has been called, become a cave of robbers in your eyes? I, also,—behold I have seen it! saith Yahweh." (Jer. vii. 1-11.)

Certainly Jeremiah stated the case frankly and clearly. Their security was false, because their lives were unrighteous. Having stated the case, he proceeds to draw his conclusion. Referring to Shiloh,

where there had been a temple sacred to Yahweh, which had been entirely destroyed, he said :

Yahweh will destroy the Jerusalem temple as he dd that in Shiloh.

" And now, because ye have done all these works, saith Yahweh, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not ; and I called you, but ye answered not ; I will do unto the house, over which my name hath been called, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers as I did unto Shiloh. And I will cast you out from before my face, as I cast out your brethren, even all the seed of Ephraim." (Jer. viii. 12-15.)

The people must have been shocked at these words. How could one dare to declare that the temple of Yahweh should be destroyed ? Would not the religion of Yahweh then be destroyed ? For how could his sacrifices be offered ?

Yahweh's religion independent of the temple.

This is just the point at which Jeremiah differs from the people. For him the religion of Yahweh consists in hearkening to his voice. It is a spiritual thing, a personal relationship between Yahweh and his people ; it is entirely independent of the temple and its sacrifices. Indeed, Jeremiah does not believe that Yahweh ever gave any commands about sacrifices and he plainly says so :

Yahweh never commanded sacrifices.

" Thus saith Yahweh of hosts, the God of Israel : Add you burnt offerings unto your sacrifices and eat flesh ! For I spake not with your fathers, neither commanded them, in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, with regard to burnt offerings or sacrifice* : but this thing I commanded them, saying,

Yahweh asks people to hear his voice.

" Hearken unto my voice, and I will be to you a god, and ye shall be to me a people." (Jer. vii. 21-23.)

Here Jeremiah reaches a height not attained by any of his predecessors, because he sees more clearly the truth they were reaching toward. Hosea had,

* Cf. Amos v. 25.

perhaps, come nearest it. Not only does religion consist in moral acts, but in a personal relationship, out of which righteousness flows naturally. The temple and all external things may pass away but the religion of Yahweh still stands. (Read Jer. ix. 23, 24.)

Jeremiah believes that the time is at hand when the external side of Judah's religion will be swept away by the Babylonians. "The voice of mirth and the voice of gladness will cease" from the streets of Jerusalem. (Read Jer. vii. 29-34.) He advises all to get ready for the coming disasters and with his advice he mingles his grief that the people of Yahweh need be so stricken. (Read Jer. viii. 13; ix. 9.)

Jeremiah grieves over Judah's fate.

"O that my head were waters,
And mine eyes a fountain of tears,
That I might weep day and night
For the slain of the daughter of my people."
(Jer. ix. 1.)

"For the mountains will I take up a wailing and a lamentation,
And for the pastures of the wilderness a dirge:
Because they are burned up, so that none passeth through,
Neither can men hear the voice of the cattle;
From the fowl of the heavens unto the beasts, they are fled, they are gone.
And I will make Jerusalem heaps, a dwelling place of jackals:
And the cities of Judah will I make a desolation without inhabitant." (Jer. ix. 10, 11. Read also Jer. ix. 17-22.)

Jerusalem to become a wilderness.

SECTION V.

FACE TO FACE WITH DEATH.

JEREMIAH'S temple discourse brought him again in danger of death. When he had finished speaking, "the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold on him, saying, 'Thou shalt surely die. Wherefore hast thou prophesied in Yahweh's name, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without inhabitant?' All the people were gathered unto Jeremiah in Yahweh's house." (Jer. xxvi. 8, 9.)

Determination to kill Jeremiah.

When the princes of Judah heard of the mob gathered at the temple they hastened there and took their places at the gate to try the case. Then the priests and prophets came forward declaring:

The princes come to the rescue.

"This man is worthy of death; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears." (xxvi. 11.)

Then Jeremiah made his defence, saying:

"Yahweh sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words ye have heard.

Jeremiah defends himself.

"Now, therefore, amend your ways and your doings, and hearken to the voice of Yahweh, your God and Yahweh will repent him of the evil that he hath spoken concerning you.

"But as for me, behold, I am in your hand: do unto me as is good and right in your eyes. Only know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye will bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof; for of a truth Yahweh hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears." (Jer. xxvi. 12-15.)

States his case frankly and leaves himself in people's hands.

By this courageous and straightforward reply Jeremiah convinced the princes who had come over from the king's palace to try the case. He also seems to have won the people, for the moment, to his side; only the priests and prophets still stood out against him. (Read xxvi. 16.)

"Certain elders" also defend Jeremiah.

Then certain elders rose up for Jeremiah's defence. They pointed back to the case of Micah, who had said:

Case of Micah cited.

"Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house a wooded height." Here was another prophet who had declared that the temple should be destroyed. But King Hezekiah had not put him to death. Indeed, he had helped the people to gain Yahweh's favour again and the calamity had been averted. (Read xxvi. 17-19.)

It is certainly refreshing to find some of the elders of Israel for once defending a righteous man. It seems strange that they should, because King Jehoiakim certainly could not have believed in Jeremiah very thoroughly. Perhaps it was because Jeremiah had a friend who had considerable influence at the court—the son of Shaphan, the secretary to the king.* (Read xxvi. 24.)

Thus Jeremiah escaped with his life, but how narrowly he escaped is shown by the story of another prophet by the name of Uriah, who was also saying that Jerusalem should be destroyed. The king and his princes tried to seize him; he fled to Egypt, but they brought him back, killed him, and threw his body into one of the common graves. (Read xxvi. 20-24.)

Jeremiah in retirement writes his book.

It is probable that Jeremiah thought it best to keep out of the public eye for some time after this event, and to give his message in some other way. Therefore

* This was Shaphan who had read the Book of the Law to King Josiah.

he began writing his book. (Read xxxvi. 1-7.) When it was finished he sent Baruch, who had been doing the writing for him, to read it in the temple on a fast day. Jeremiah says he could not go to the temple. (Read xxxvi. 5, 6.) Was it because the people would have killed him if he had appeared there again? No doubt Jeremiah had repeated in the roll the threat of destruction unless the people returned "everyone from his evil way." (Read xxxvi. 7.)

Baruch reads Jeremiah's book in the temple.

In the next year, when a special fast had been proclaimed, Baruch read again the words of the book in the house of Yahweh to the people, having been given permission by another son of Shaphan. (Read xxxvi. 10.) Now the grandson of Shaphan seems to have been much impressed by the reading of this roll. He immediately went over to the king's house and into the chamber of the secretary. There he found many of the princes gathered. He told them what he had heard and they sent a messenger to Baruch, asking him to come and bring the roll. Soon Baruch appeared, bringing his roll. When the princes heard its contents "they turned in fear to one another," and said, "We will surely tell the king all these words." After asking Baruch exactly how he had written the book they sent him away, saying:

The book makes a deep impression on the princes.

"Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be."

The king sends for the book.

Then the princes planned how they should approach the king on the subject. They decided to leave the roll in the secretary's office for safe keeping, and first tell the king about it. When the king heard about the roll he decided he would like to see it himself, and sent his messenger, Jehudi, to bring it.

Now the king was sitting in the winter-house; and the fire on the brazier was burning before him. And it came to pass, that as often as Jehudi read three or

The king destroys the book.

four columns, he cut them with a pen-knife and flung (them) into the fire that was on the brazier." (xxxvi. 22, 23.) Some of the princes plead with him not to burn the roll, "but he hearkened not to them." He also commanded that Jeremiah and Baruch be brought. "But Yahweh hid them." They had doubtless taken the advice of the princes and let no one know where they were. Wisdom was the better part of valour in those circumstances. Jeremiah still had much work to do.

Jeremiah and Baruch hide from the king.

Re-writing of book and denunciation of king.

First, he rewrote his book, adding to it "many like words" and a promise of a terrible death to the king. (xxxvi. 27-32.) This prediction never was fulfilled. The king did not live to see any of the calamities of Judah. But Jeremiah was right in saying that he deserved punishment. One of his sins was that he did not pay his labourers; he "used his neighbour's service without wages." Apparently he was a great builder, but he built "by unrighteousness" and "by injustice." Therefore, when he should pass away, said Jeremiah, no one should lament for him, saying,

"Ah, my brother! or Ah, sister!"

No one should weep for him, saying,

"Ah, lord, or Ah, his glory!" (Jer. xxii. 13-19.)

SECTION VI.

SORROW FOR JUDAH.

DURING the latter part of Jehoiakim's reign Jeremiah teaches in public again. Affairs are steadily growing more serious. Jehoiakim had rebelled against Babylon, and as a result the country was being

harassed by various marauding bands. (2 Kings xxiv. 1, 2.) Might this not be a time when the people could be reached if Jeremiah appealed to them? At least he decides to try, and he uses some novel methods.

The insecurity of life and property on account of these wandering bands made some of the people who lived in the country come into Jerusalem for safety. (Jer. xxxv. 11.) Among others came the "Rechabites," a group of related families who still lived according to the "nomadic ideal." They regarded it as a sacred duty handed down to them by their fathers that they should drink no wine, build no houses, sow no seed. They were worshippers of Yahweh, but they did not believe in the Canaanite civilization which the people of Judah had adopted.

The example of the Rechabites.

Now Jeremiah thought of a strange plan for impressing a lesson upon the people of Judah. He invited "the whole house of the Rechabites" into one of the chambers in the temple, and there he set before them "bowls full of wine and cups," and said to them, "Drink ye wine," but they replied, "We will drink no wine." Here was steadfastness of principle. This was what the people of Judah lacked. Therefore Jeremiah went out to them, telling them that the Rechabites lived up to their principles, keeping the commandments of their fathers, drinking no wine "unto this day." Jeremiah does not say nor imply that he thinks the Rechabites have the right way of living. He does not himself think it wrong to sow seed, build houses and drink wine, but he thinks the people of Judah ought to live up to their principles as steadfastly as the Rechabites live up to theirs. (Read Jer. xxxv.)

Jeremiah also draws a lesson from a potter. He goes to his house and watches him work, noting how he made over again any vessels, that were marred in the making. This he used in a discourse to the

A lesson from a potter.

people, saying that Judah was a marred vessel which Yahweh must make over again. The people again were angry and planned to kill Jeremiah. (Read Jer. xviii.)

In this period Jeremiah utters laments over Judah that reveal the poetic and sympathetic side of his nature. In the following he represents Yahweh's sorrow in giving up Judah:

Yahweh must cast off his beloved heritage.

"I have forsaken mine house,
I have cast off mine heritage;
I have given the dearly beloved of my soul
Into the hands of her enemies.

Yahweh's heritage has turned against him.

"Mine heritage is become unto me
As a lion in the forest:
She hath uttered her voice against me,
Therefore do I hate her.

Outsiders attack Yahweh's heritage.

"Mine heritage is to me a speckled* bird of prey,
The birds of prey are against her.
Go ye, assemble all the beasts of the field,
Bring them to devour.

Others tread down Yahweh's vineyard.

"Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard,
They have trodden my portion under foot,
They have made my pleasant portion
Into a desolate wilderness.

All will soon be desolation.

"They have made it a desolation,
It mourneth before me, desolate;
The whole land is made desolate,
And no man lays it to heart.

* Birds sometimes attack a bird of unusual plumage.

"Upon all the bare heights in the wilderness,
Spoilers are come;
From one end of the land to the other,
No flesh hath peace." (Jer. xii. 7-12.)

The spoilers are at hand.

Though Jeremiah is doing all in his power to win the people of Judah to righteous lives, it is with a sinking heart, for they have formed the habit of doing evil; they cannot change now any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots.

"Lift up your eyes and see,
How they come from the north!
Where is the flock that was given thee,
Thy beautiful flock?

"What wilt thou say when he shall place
Over thee thy friends,*
Those whom thou hast made familiar with thee,
To rule over thee?

"And when thou shalt say in thy heart,
Why is this come upon me?
For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts uncovered,
And thy heels suffer violence.

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin?
Or the leopard his spots?
Then may ye also do good,
That are accustomed to do evil."

(Jer. xiii. 20-23.)

* *i.e.*, the Babylonians whom their deeds invited.

Some time during this period Jeremiah tried a strange device for impressing the people. He tells of it thus :

The lesson from the girdle.

" —Thus said Yahweh unto us, Go and buy thee a linen girdle, and put it upon thy loins, but bring it not into water.

" So I bought the girdle according to the word of Yahweh, and put it upon my loins.

" And the word of Yahweh came unto me a second time, saying,

" Take the girdle that thou hast bought, which is upon thy loins, and arise, go to Euphrates, and bury it there in a chink of the rock."

After " many days " Jeremiah went back and dug out the girdle and found it " marred " and " profitable for nothing." Then he went to the people, no doubt taking the ruined girdle with him. Holding it up before them he said that Judah should become like that girdle. " For as the girdle cleaveth to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith Yahweh ; that they might be unto me for a people and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory ; but they hearkened not." (Jer. xiii. 1-11.)

At another time Jeremiah said to the people : " Every jar is filled with wine." That seemed a useless remark and they, of course, replied, " Do we not know that every jar is filled with wine ? " Even so, said Jeremiah, are the people of Judah filled with drunkenness and Yahweh shall destroy unless they will hearken to his voice before their " feet stumble upon the dark mountain." (Read Jer. xiii. 12-17.)

The lesson from the broken bottle.

Again Jeremiah goes down into the valley of Hinnom, taking a " potter's earthen bottle " (xix. 1.) He took with him some of the elders and probably

as many people as he could. There he dashed the bottle in pieces, crying out in the name of Yahweh,

"Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again." (Read Jer. xix. 1-13.)

Again Jeremiah ventures to speak in the court of the temple, repeating the message which he had given in the Valley of Hinnom, and again disaster meets him there. He is seized and put into the stocks, but the next day is released and repeats his message. (xix. 14 to xx. 6.)

Of course all these devices that Jeremiah used were for the purpose of spreading his message to many more people than he could see. He would be able to speak to only a few of the citizens of Jerusalem, but the news of his symbolic acts would spread. Have you heard what Jeremiah did to-day? people would say to one another, and as the story was told his message would become known.

Yet with all these efforts to get the people to see what their unrighteous way of life was bringing upon them, little seems to be accomplished, and Jeremiah again is overwhelmed with despair. His message, he says, is like a fire burning within him (xx. 9); utter it he must. But of what value is it since no one heeds it? Would it not be better to have never been born than to live such a seemingly fruitless life? (xx. 14-18.) Yet he recognises that Yahweh is with him, even though it is "as a mighty one and terrible" (xx. 11), and in the end his message will be seen to be right.

Jeremiah's message is like a burning fire within him, yet it has not availed to save Judah.

SECTION VII.

JEREMIAH AND THE FALL OF JUDAH.

At last the calamity which Jeremiah had been so long expecting came. The Babylonians marched triumphantly west and became masters of everything from the Nile to the Euphrates. (2 Kings xxvii. 7.) On the throne of Judah they found Jehoiachin, the young son of Jehoiakim. When the mighty Babylonian knocked at the gate of Jerusalem the frightened young king surrendered, and he and all his nobles and all the best people of the land were marched off to swell the train of captives which the great Nebuchadnezzar should bring to Babylon. (Read 2 Kings xxiv. 11-17.)

First deportation to Babylon.

Now, at last, when Jeremiah's worst fears for Judah were beginning to be realized, he began to speak of hope, but it was a far-off hope and it applied chiefly to those who had been taken to Babylon. He sets this forth by means of an analogy. He says that he saw two baskets of figs set before the temple. One basket contained "very good figs, like the figs that are first ripe," and the other "very bad figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad." (xxiv. 2.) As he looked at the baskets it seemed to him that Yahweh spoke to him, saying;

The two baskets of figs.

"What seest thou, Jeremiah?"

And he replied:

"Figs; the good figs, very good, and the bad figs, very bad; that cannot be eaten they are so bad." Then the explanation came clear; the good figs were the people who had been carried into captivity; the bad figs were those who had been left in Judah (xxiv. 5.) It was only to those who had been carried away that one might look for a future for Judah.

Judah's hope of a future depends on the exiles.

Their punishment would surely bring them to see the true nature of the Yahweh religion. Then they would have " a heart to know " Yahweh ; then they could be restored to their own land and become a people that no one could pull down. (Read Jer. xxiv.) All this bright future for Judah, however, depends entirely on moral and spiritual conditions, on whether the people learn by their calamity to know Yahweh in his true moral and spiritual character. Yahweh will not save Judah simply because she is Judah, his chosen one.

Jeremiah, therefore, set to work to do all in his power to help the people to get the right discipline out of their exile. In the first place, he saw clearly that the exile must be a long one and that Jerusalem and the temple must yet be destroyed. For if there were to be a return in a few years to exactly the same Jerusalem, people would soon fall back into their old habits and the whole purpose of the exile would be lost. It was on these moral grounds that Jeremiah now gave himself to the advocating of two chief points. (1) to the exiles he wrote letters and sent messages, saying that the exile must be long. (2) To the people in Judah he said that the country should yet be made utterly desolate and that only those who deserted to the Babylonians had any hope of better things.

The exile must be long and Jerusalem must yet fall.

Of course these messages must have seemed incomprehensible to many of the people ; the man who actually measures things by spiritual standards is always incomprehensible to those to whom material things seem the fundamental realities. To most people the all-important thing would be Judah's material prosperity. To Jeremiah that was a secondary consideration, the first being that Judah should " know Yahweh " in his true spiritual nature. Now this could be soonest accomplished if people could be made to recognise the purposes of the exile, for in so doing they would recognise the fundamental spiritual principle. (Read Jer. xxix.)

Jeremiah and Hananiah.

Now Jeremiah's worst enemies in his work were the prophets who prophesied quick return and assigned no spiritual reasons for the exile. There was one, Hananiah, who said that within two years the sacred vessels should be returned to the temple and the people allowed to return. Jeremiah listened to Hananiah proclaiming this doctrine and said, Would that it might be so; but the time would show that his words were false. (Read Jer. xxviii. 1-9.) It seems that Jeremiah had for some time been wearing a wooden yoke about his neck as a sign that the captivity was Yahweh's will, and that Judah ought to accept it and learn its purpose. Hananiah was so bold as to go to Jeremiah and take the yoke from his neck and break it, declaring that so the Babylonian yoke should be broken. Apparently Jeremiah answered nothing at the time, but simply "went his way" (xxviii. 11.) The account is rather obscure, but possibly he went at once to a smith's and secured an iron yoke, then returned to declare to Hananiah and his audience that Babylon should rule with a yoke of iron. (Read Jer. xxviii. 10-17.) Jeremiah laments more than anything else the stupidity of those who call themselves prophets. He says "they speak a vision of their own heart and not out of the mouth of Yahweh." (xxiii. 16.) They go about continually telling people who walk after the stubbornness of their own hearts. "Ye shall have peace," and "No evil shall come upon you." (xxiii. 17.) They make this mistake because they have not listened to Yahweh; they have not waited "to perceive and hear his word." (xxiii. 18.) Yahweh is not a God far away, but near at hand. He fills all the heavens, but no one can hide from him. (xxiii. 23, 24.) Why, then, should not prophets inquire of him? Can they not recognise the message of Yahweh? Is it not like a fire within one? Like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? (xxiii. 29.)

Distinctions between true and false prophets.

But false prophets all talk alike. They steal their

words from each other. (xxiii. 30.) They all go about using the same formal phrases "the burden of Yahweh; the burden of Yahweh." Jeremiah says true prophets will avoid these phrases, "for every man's own word will be his burden." (xxiii. 36, 38.) And since he is speaking the burden of his own heart, he will not always be saying, "He saith." (xxiii. 31.) The false prophet then, is known by his formal phrases and his quotations.

When in about 588 the Babylonians appeared before Jerusalem, Zedekiah appeared to Jeremiah to know the issue of the siege and Jeremiah fearlessly declared that the city should fall and that only the people who deserted to the invaders should live (xxi. 1-10). Of course this seemed like treason, but king and people must certainly have understood by this time why Jeremiah dared advocate treason. When the king sent to him again he repeated his former message, adding a reproof to the people because they had not freed their slaves as they had promised to do. (xxxiv. 1-22.)

When Jeremiah was one day going out to Anathoth to see about some land that came to him by inheritance, he was suspected of "falling away to the Chaldeans," since he had so often advised others to do so. But he was not concerned about saving his own life and he answered,

"It is false; I am not falling away to the Chaldeans."

Nevertheless he was dragged back to the court and thrown into prison, where he remained "many days." (xxxvii. 11-16.) The king must have felt the strength of Jeremiah's character, for again he sends for him, having him brought from the prison to see what message from Yahweh he would bring. Again Jeremiah repeats that the city will fall, and takes the chance to ask for release from the dungeon where he can scarcely live. The king grants the request and he

is placed in the " guard court." (xxxvii. 17-21.) Here he could speak to the people, and since he kept repeating his treasonable advice he was accused before the king of high treason and put down into a cistern where he " sank in the mire." (xxxviii. 1-6.) Here he must have soon perished had not one of the servants secured his release and helped him out of the cistern by a cord made of " torn and tattered rags." (xxxviii. 7-13.) One time more the king sent for Jeremiah and one time more Jeremiah said doom was coming and counselled surrender. (xxxviii. 14-28.) Soon the city fell; Zedekiah attempted to escape, but was taken and blinded after his sons had been killed before his eyes. To Jeremiah the conquerors were kind, ordering that no harm should be done to him. (xxxix. 1-14.)

Now that Judah's doom was fulfilled Jeremiah's hope rises! Already when he was in prison he had bought a piece of ground in Anathoth because he believed the time would come when Judah would return. (xxxii.) Now he declares with entire assurance that the time is coming when Judah and Israel shall be restored to Judah, where they will live lives true to Yahweh. It is impossible to understand Jeremiah at all unless one sees what a real thing this spiritual Israel was to him. This ideal Israel that should " know Yahweh " was the one thing that was sure. It was because of his belief in this, that he was willing to see the material Judah pass away for the time. Thus all the outward side of Israel's religion should perish and they would come to see the spiritual side.

In these dark times it was, that Jeremiah uttered his great prophecy of the new covenant, which should be an inner covenant; it is to be written upon the hearts of the people. " And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, ' Know Yahweh,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith

Yahweh." (xxxi. 31-34). Although dragged away to Egypt, against his will (ch. 40-44) and possibly stoned there by his own countrymen, Jeremiah succeeded in making his belief in a spiritual Israel a reality, at least to some of the people in exile, and made it possible for the prophets who followed him to use his life and message as a basis for regenerating Judah.

EZEKIEL.

SECTION I.

EZEKIEL'S EARLY WORK.

EZEKIEL was probably a young man of Jerusalem when Jeremiah was preaching there. Belonging to the priestly class, he was carried away in the first deportation to Babylon. To have lived in such troublous times could scarcely help making one thoughtful, especially as Jeremiah was explaining events in one way and other prophets quite differently. Although he never mentions Jeremiah, he must have been deeply impressed by his life and work, for he takes up his work of trying to get the exiles to learn the purpose of their exile and thus get ready for a return in the distant future.

Ezekiel in Jerusalem during Jeremiah's ministry.

However, he does not copy Jeremiah's work in any mechanical way; he does not begin preaching until he had been in exile for five years, and only after he had become conscious in a vision that he had a special work to do among the exiles. "The form in which Yahweh first appeared to him is described with great minuteness of detail in the first chapter of his book. It would seem that in some hour of solitary meditation by the River Chebar his attention was attracted to a storm-cloud forming in the north and advancing toward him across the plain. Looking more closely,

Ezekiel's call.

he discerns four living creatures, of strange, composite form, human in general appearance, but winged; and each having four heads combining the highest types of animal life, man, lion, ox and eagle. These are afterwards identified with the cherubim of the Temple symbolism (ch. x. 20); but some features of the conception may have been suggested by the composite animal figures of Babylonian art, with which the prophet must have been already familiar. The interior space is occupied by a hearth of glowing coals, from which the lightning flashes constantly dart to and fro between the cherubim. Beside each cherub is a wheel, formed apparently of two wheels intersecting each other at right angles. The appearance of the wheels is like "chrysolite," and their rims are filled with eyes, denoting the intelligence by which their motions are directed. The wheels and the cherubim together embody the spontaneous energy by which the throne of God is transported whither he wills; although there is no mechanical connection between them, they are represented as animated by a common spirit, directing all their motions in perfect harmony. Over the heads and outstretched wings of the cherubim is a rigid pavement or "firmament," like crystal; and above this is a sapphire stone supporting the throne of Yahweh. The divine Being is seen in the likeness of a man, and around him, as if to temper the fierceness of the light in which he dwells, is a radiance like that of the rainbow."* (Ch. i. 1-28.)

Figurative representation of Yahweh's majesty.

Certainly the central meaning of this vision is that Ezekiel felt himself to be in the presence of Yahweh. He falls on his face as he realizes his own smallness before the greatness of Yahweh. The cherubim, etc., are doubtless part of the ideas of the time which seemed to belong to divinity. But that behind all this imagery there was a real spiritual experience is shown by the fact that it resulted in Ezekiel's

A real spiritual experience behind the imagery of the vision.

* From Skinner's Ezekiel in "Expositor's Bible," pp. 27, 28.

feeling that he had a call to a special work and that he soon set about it.

Ezekiel represents the spirit of God as a real presence. The message spoken to him becomes so completely a part of his being that he describes it as eating the words.

Ezekiel receives his message.

"And I beheld, and lo, there was stretched forth to me a hand, wherein was the roll of a book, and he unrolled it before me, and it was written within and without, and in it was written lamentation, and mourning, and woe. And he said to me, Son of Man, what thou findest eat; eat this book, and go and speak to the House of Israel." (ii. 9 to iii 1.)

Beginning of work.

Fully conscious, then, that a great commission had been given him, Ezekiel starts toward the place where he is to preach. He says:

"I went away deeply stirred, and the hand of Yahweh was strong upon me. And I came to the captives at Tel-abib, by the river Chebar, and sat there among them for seven days dismayed" (iii. 14, 15.) Exactly where Tel-abib was is not known. It was probably one of the mounds formed by the floods that swept over the level lands near the River Euphrates. But the name of the River Chebar has recently been found mentioned in a contract tablet dug up by the American excavators at Nippur.

Inability to give message.

Having reached the place where he should give his message, he seems to have been entirely overcome by it. For seven days he said nothing, then he heard Yahweh speaking to him again:

"Son of Man, I appoint thee a watchman to the House of Israel." (iii. 17.) The responsibility of warning both the righteous and the wicked was laid upon him (iii. 15-21.) Then he arose and went out to a valley, where again the glory of Yahweh was apparent to him, but still he felt that he could not possibly speak his message. His mouth was closed

(iii. 22-25). However, he does see how he can give his message in a symbolic way. He therefore takes a brick and draws upon it a walled city, surrounded by mounds, etc., as if an enemy were besieging it. Indeed, Ezekiel himself was to play the part of besieger. All this was to set forth that Jerusalem should fall and the exile therefore be long. This was the same message that Jeremiah was giving at the same time in Jerusalem. The length of the captivity was symbolized in a strange way; Ezekiel was to lie on his left side one hundred* and ninety days, and then on his right side; his food during this period is to be slight, to indicate the rigours of a siege (iv. 16). The prophet also shaves his head and beard to indicate that Jerusalem is to be left barren (v. 1-4). Whether Ezekiel actually did all these things or whether he employs them simply as a literary device, there is no means of knowing, but that his purpose was to stir up the people to see the moral purpose of the exile is shown by the sermons that follow. (Read ch. v. 5 to vii. 27.) This moral purpose underlying all these is further intensified thus: Ezekiel represents himself as carried by the hair of his head to Jerusalem; there he digs through the walls into the temple and beholds the unspeakable abominations going on there. The people make various excuses for themselves, but Ezekiel has ever before him the vision of the greatness of Yahweh (x. 1-22), and in his presence Jerusalem cannot stand (ch. viii. to xi.). It seems to be impossible for the exiles to believe this. Their faith has for so long clung to the temple that they cannot believe that it will be destroyed, but Ezekiel declares that the monarchy of Judah must come to an end. In ch. xii. 1-15 he states this in general terms, and in ch. xvii. by means of allegory which he carefully explains. Ch. xix. laments the fate of Judah's lost kings and of Judah.

Symbolic portrayal of message.

The moral reasons for the fall of Jerusalem.

* This is the reading of the Septuagint, and is more nearly the length of Israel's captivity.

Lament over Judah.

"Thy mother was like a vine in a vineyard planted by waters,
Fruitful and full of branches, by reason of plentiful waters,
One of its mighty branches became a royal sceptre,
To the clouds its stature towered,
Lofty, amid the mass of its boughs.

"But in wrath was the vine plucked up, cast down to the ground,
The east wind withered its fruit,
Broken off was its mighty branch, withered, consumed by fire,
In the wilderness now it is set, in a land dry and thirsty,
Fire is gone forth from the branch, no royal sceptre.
This is a Lament, and a Lament it is become"
(Ez. xix. 10-14).

The responsibility of each individual.

In ch. xvi. Ezekiel sets forth the destruction of Jerusalem under the figure of Hosea—that of an unfaithful wife, but it is done in a much harsher way. Indeed, Ezekiel is constantly using the figures and conceptions of the early prophets, but he has almost always weakened them because his own mind was of such a different type. However, Ezekiel no doubt did great service to his own generation, though it is difficult to make him intelligible to modern times. But there is one conception which he developed more emphatically than his predecessors—the idea of individual responsibility. Jeremiah had preached it, but not greatly emphasized it. (cf. Jer. xxxi. 29, 30.) He had talked of the time when each individual should know Yahweh, but Ezekiel saw the special fitness of laying this doctrine upon the consciences of the exiles upon whom the possibility of a new Israel must depend. He therefore sets forth most clearly that each "soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Read ch. xviii.) Chs. xx. to xxiv. let us see Ezekiel repeating

his prophecies of Jerusalem's doom when the city is actually being besieged.* He tells people not to mourn for Jerusalem. As an example of how they should bear their grief, Ezekiel refuses to use any of the ordinary signs of mourning when his wife suddenly died. (xxiv. 15-24.)

This ends the first period of Ezekiel's ministry. He now retires to wait for the fall of Jerusalem, for only then will the people he able to actually turn their faces toward a new and different nation of Israel.

Ezekiel retires for two years.

SECTION II.

EZEKIEL'S LATER WORK.

"ONE day in January of the year 586 the tidings circulated through the Jewish colony at Tel-abib that the 'city was smitten.'" "It is remarkable that the first intimation of the issue of the siege was brought to the exiles by one of their own countrymen, who had escaped at the capture of the city. It is probable that the messenger did not set out at once, but waited until he could bring some information as to how matters were settling down after the war. Or he may have been a captive who had trudged the weary road to Babylon in chains under the escort of Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, and afterwards succeeded in making his escape to the older settlement where Ezekiel lived."† (Read Ez. xxxiii. 21.)

Jerusalem fallen.

* In ch. xxiii. he makes some strange new names for Judah and Israel—Aholah and Aholibah.

† P. 287, Skinner's Ezekiel.

The news was the sign for Ezekiel to take up his ministry again, and the excitement of the people was such that they came in crowds to visit him. To be sure, he feels that their coming is fruitless, since he was to them only "as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." The people came out of mere curiosity, "They heard his words and did them not." (xxxiii. 31, 32.) Still it was worth something that they now came to him. This certainly gave him an opportunity. (Read Ez. xxxiii. 30-33.) How did Ezekiel use the opportunity of speaking to people who were forced to admit that he had been right and they wrong concerning the fall of Jerusalem? He pointed the way to a new life. Whereas before he had spoken words which seemed like darkness, he now turned faces towards the light. He stops to blame only one class —the "shepherds of Israel." These must have been the priests and leaders. They seem to have established themselves comfortably in Babylon, supported probably by contributions from the people, and had lost touch with the spirit of prophetism. Ezekiel, therefore, cries out to them:

The people crowd to Ezekiel.

Ezekiel's new message.

"Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the sheep? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill the fatlings; but ye feed not the sheep. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with rigour have ye ruled over them. And they were scattered because there was no shepherd." (Read xxxiv. 1-10.) These who should have helped their exiled people to bear their hardships had become themselves an additional burden. But Ezekiel has great sympathy with the mass of the people, the sheep, as he calls them. It is the fault rather of their leaders

Condemnation of the leaders.

than themselves that they have gone astray. He therefore tells them to turn their faces directly toward Yahweh, who will himself be their shepherd.

" For thus saith Yahweh God : Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep ; and I will deliver them out of all places whither they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. . . And I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses. . . . Upon the mountains of the height of Israel shall their fold be. . . I myself will feed my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, saith Yahweh God. I will seek that which was lost, and will bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick. . . Ye are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture are men, and I am your God, saith Yahweh God." (Read Ez. xxxiv. 11-31.)

Yahweh himself will be Israel's shepherd.

Of course it must have been a joy to the people to hear Ezekiel speaking such words of good cheer when always before he had seemed to speak so darkly. Before, he said Jerusalem must fall ; now he declares that the exiles shall return to their land. Yahweh will be their shepherd, but they shall also have a king of the line of David. (Ez. xxxiv. 23, 24.) The land shall again become beautiful and fruitful.

" O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people Israel." (Read Ez. xxxvi. 1-15.)

Jerusalem to be repeopled.

But this restored land must be inhabited by morally restored people. When Israel dwelt in their land before " they defiled it by their way and their doing." (xxxvi. 17.) It was for this reason that they were sent into exile. (xxxvi. 18, 19.) Therefore Yahweh says now to the people :

" A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony

Those who dwell in the new Jerusalem must have new hearts.

heart of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you. . . Ye shall be my people and I will be your God. . . I will save you from all your uncleannesses. . . Ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities." (xxxvi. 24-31.)

Yahweh will restore Israel to vindicate his own name both to Israel and to the nations.

But " not for your sake do I this, saith Yahweh God, be it known unto you ; be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel." (xxxvi. 32.) It is because " I had pity for mine holy name, which the House of Israel had profaned among the nations." (Read xxxvi. 20-24.) And it is in order that " the nations that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord have builded the ruined places, and planted that which was desolate. . . Therefore shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men ; and they shall know that I am Yahweh " (xxxvi. 33-37.)

Reasons for the Exile.

Ezekiel's explanation of the Exile is simple and clear ; it was a punishment for Israel's sins, and out of it would come a demonstration to the world, of Yahweh's power and his demand for righteousness.

" So the house of Israel shall know that I am Yahweh their God, from that day and forward. And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity." (Read xxxix. 21-29.)

This explanation does not make advance upon the thought of other prophets. That calamity is punishment, Amos preached, and others after him. Ezekiel does not rise to the spiritual conception of Jeremiah that religion does not depend upon a temple. Indeed, the last part of the book of Ezekiel (chs. xl. to xlviii.) is taken up with a plan which he drew up for the rebuilding of the city and re-organization of the temple ceremonies. He wanted the people of Israel to be holy and righteous when they went back to Jerusalem, but one thing that seemed to him essential to holiness was the exact observation of ceremonies. Ezekiel is perhaps the earliest of the school of writers which shortly afterwards produced the Law of Holiness

Beginnings of legalism.

embodied in the book of Leviticus and finally led to the bringing together of the Pentateuch. The older prophets constantly urged that Yahweh did not care for sacrifices and feasts, but the priestly emphasis in forms which began with Ezekiel, set in motion forces which had almost crushed out the spirit of prophecy by the time of Christ.

Ezekiel's work for his time.

However, Ezekiel's work was in some ways of great value to his time. Perhaps his earliest ministry was valuable chiefly because he repeated the message of Jeremiah. He said that Jerusalem must fall, though he can scarcely have seen the spiritual reasons for it which Jeremiah saw. However, he must he accredited with a further development, or at least a stronger statement, of the doctrine of individual responsibility than Jeremiah. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (xviii. 20) had not been so clearly stated by anyone else.

The Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones.

Moreover, it was a great thing for Ezekiel to believe as strongly as he did in the restoration of Jerusalem and her people at the moment that her fortunes were darkest. He had a faith that could believe that life could come out of death, as is shown by his vision of the valley of dry bones. "These bones are the whole house of Israel," whose "hope is lost" (xxxvii. 11); but Ezekiel believed that the breath of Yahweh could resurrect the nation. (Read Ez. xxxvii. 1-14.)

THE SECOND ISAIAH.*

SECTION I.

THE GREAT UNKNOWN.

At last there rises on the horizon the "bright consummate flower" of Hebrew prophetism. His name, the details of his life are all unknown; only his spiritual message lives, but this is so full of meaning that one soon forgets that it was ever supposed necessary to know one's name and place of birth, etc., in order to say that we know him. If we can enter into his thoughts and feelings, his struggles and his faith, what does it matter that we do not know his name?

The first words that strike our ears have come like a strain of music to people of many ages and climes, and it is, therefore, especially fitting that Handel has given them an appropriate musical setting.

Let Israel take hope since the punishment for her sins is now completed.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, says your God.
Speak ye tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her,
That her hard service is accomplished, her debt of guilt is discharged,
That she has received from Yahweh's hand double for all her sins." (Isa. xliv. 1, 2.)

* See Preface, page 5.

This is, indeed, a new message. All the prophets before have been trying to convince Israel of her sin and the punishment that would follow. They did their work well, and Israel was convinced of her sin, and certainly she had felt the punishment. The books that were re-edited during the Exile show that the people—at least the leaders of the people—had learned to read all their history in the shadow of their sins. It must therefore have been startling and comforting to hear a prophet declaring, Your sin has been fully punished; now is the time to hope for great things. For what may one, then, dare hope?

"Hark! there is a cry: Clear ye in the wilderness
the way of Yahweh;
Make plain in the desert a highway for our God,
Let every mountain and hill sink down, and every
valley be uplifted,
And let the steep ground become level, and the
rough country plain!
And the glory of Yahweh will be revealed,
And all flesh will see it together,
For the mouth of Yahweh has spoken it."
(Isa. xl. 3-5.)

A voice proclaims that a way shall be made straight across the desert.

All peoples shall be astonished at the making of this way.

A way is to be made for a king to go across the desert. That king can be no other than Yahweh, and his destination can certainly be only Jerusalem. Already the prophet seems to see messengers arriving at Jerusalem. and proclaiming the good news that Yahweh is coming back leading his people and tenderly caring for them even as a shepherd cares for his flock.

"To a high mountain get thee up,
O company that bringest good news to Zion,
Lift up mightily thy voice,
O company that bringest good news to Jerusalem,
Say to the cities of Judah: Behold! your God!

Let advance messengers proclaim to Jerusalem that Yahweh is coming across the desert, leading his people.

Behold, Yahweh comes as a strong one, his arm
ruling for him ;
Behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense
goes before him.
As a shepherd will he tend his flock, with his arm
will he gather it,
The lambs in his bosom will he carry, those that
give suck will he lead." (Isa. xl. 9-11).

The hope, then, to which the prophet was asking his people to rise, was release from their captivity in Babylon and return to Jerusalem, and, more important still, assurance of the supremacy of Yahweh, Israel's God.

But Judah could not rise at once to a hope like this ; doubts must first be answered. Look at the great nations around us, the people could not help saying : See how great they are, how they control everything ; how can we hope that Judah shall ever rise ? To this the prophet answers by proclaiming the deepest conviction of his soul. So real is this conviction that it seems to come to him like a voice rising above discords and objections :

The prophet's call.

" Hark ! A voice says : Proclaim !
And I say : What shall I proclaim ?
All flesh is grass and all the strength thereof
Like the flowers of the field ;
The grass withers, the flowers fade,
Because the breath of Yahweh has blown
thereon.
His message " All things pass, but God is sure."
The grass withers, the flowers fade,
But the word of our God stands forever."
(Is. xl. 6-8.)

Who can understand Yahweh's power in the earth ?

" Who has measured the waters with the hollow of
his hand,
And meted out heaven with the span,
And comprehended the dust of the earth

In one-third of an ephah,
And weighed mountains with scales
And hills with a balance ?
Who has meted out the mind of Yahweh,
And who, as his counsellor, gives him knowledge ?
With whom has he taken counsel,
That he might obtain insight,
And be taught as to the path of right,
And be shown the way of understanding ?
Behold, the nations are like a drop on a bucket,
And as fine dust on a balance they are reckoned ;
Behold, he lifts up the islands like a mote ;
And Lebanon is not sufficient for fuel,
Nor its beasts enough for burnt-offerings."

Who can know the mind of Yahweh ?

How can any nation withstand Yahweh ?

(Isa. xl. 12-16).

The one thing that can make Israel ready to rise up and become a great people again, is knowledge of the greatness of her God. It is this, therefore, that the prophet feels called to proclaim—" the word of our God stands forever." Why, then, should his people fear ? He can remove mountains ; nothing can stand in the way of his purpose. Even great Babylon is as nothing when she stands opposed to Yahweh's purpose.

" All nations are as nothing before him ;
They are reckoned by him as vacancy and chaos.'

(Isa. xl. 17.)

How, then, can anyone imagine for a moment that any image can be compared with him ? How can any Israelite be afraid of the Babylonian gods, who are represented by images made of destructible things ?

No image can represent Yahweh.

"To whom will ye liken God,
And what sort of image place beside him?
An image! a craftsman has cast it,
And a goldsmith overlays it with gold";
"One helps the other, and says to his fellow:
Be of good courage.
And the craftsmen encourages the goldsmith;

An image is made by men and of destructible material.

He who smooths with the hammer, him who smites on the anvil,
Saying of the soldering: it is good; and he fastens it with nails,
. . . Chooses an undecaying wood,
Seeks for himself a skilled craftsman,
To set up an image that will not totter."
(Isa. xl. 18, 19, 20 and xli. 6, 7.)

Yahweh is the Creator of the earth.

"Do ye not perceive? Do ye not hear?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have ye not understood from the foundation of the earth?

He sits high above the earth.

"It is he who sits above the vault of the earth,
So high that its inhabitants are as locusts,
Who has stretched out the heavens as a firmament,
And spread them out as a tent to dwell in;

He rules the princes, putting down and setting up whom he will.

"It is he who turns princes to nothing;
Who makes the judges of the earth like chaos.
Scarcely have they been planted, scarcely have they been sown,
Scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,
When he blows upon them they wither,
And like stubble a tempest carries them away.

He rules the stars, calling each one by name.

"To whom, then, shall ye liken me,
That I should be equal to him, says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes on high; who has created these?
He who brings out their host in full number,

And calls them all by name;
For fear of his great strength and mighty power
Not one of them remains behind."

(Isa. xl. 21-26.)

Yet in spite of the greatness of their God, the people of Israel are going about with bowed, discouraged heads, but whoever will trustfully wait on Yahweh will find himself victorious in the end.

The people of Israel complain.

"Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel;
My fortune is hidden from Yahweh,
And my right is unnoticed by my God?
Hast thou not perceived? hast thou not heard?
An everlasting God is Yahweh,
The Creator of the ends of the earth.
He faints not; nor can he be wearied;
His insight is unsearchable;
To the weary he gives vigour,
And to the powerless he increases strength,
Youths may faint and grow weary,
Young warriors may stumble,
But they who wait for Yahweh renew their vigour,
They put forth, as it were, eagle's wings."

They think Yahweh has fainted.

But if they wait for him they shall fly as on eagles' wings.

(Isa. xl. 27-31.)

SECTION II.

A CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNT OF CYRUS THE GREAT.

Let all peoples consider.

"Hearken to me in silence, ye far countries;
And, ye peoples, wait for my arguing;
Come near! Afterwards speak!
Together let us approach the tribunal.

Who has raised up the great conqueror of the earth ?

" Who was it that roused up from the East,*
Him on whose steps attends victory,
That gives up before him peoples,
And into kings strikes a terror ?

Who has granted such phenomenal victory ?

" His sword makes them like dust,
His bow, like driven stubble ;
He pursues them, passes on in safety ;
The path with his feet he does not tread.

Yahweh, the only God, hath raised up Cyrus.

" Who has wrought and accomplished this ?
He who called the generations from the beginning,
I, Yahweh, who am the first,
And with those who come after am still the same."

(Isa. xli. 1-4.) (Read also Isa. xli. 21-29.)

This passage shows that the " Prophet of the Exile " was not simply announcing his inner convictions ; he believed that he saw confirmation of them in the political events of his time. He believed he saw the person through whom opportunity would presently come to Israel to mount up on wings as eagles.

All eyes were at this time fixed upon the career of the young Cyrus. First he was king of Ansan, in Elan, east of Babylonia ; then, in 564, he became king of Persia. In 549 he defeated the king of Media, and thus became king of the Medo-Persian Empire. By this time it was felt that he was becoming dangerous to the peace of the world. Might he not be planning to take Babylon ? If he did that, the world would be at his feet. He certainly should be stopped. It was Crœsus, the wealthy king of Lydia, who undertook the task of stopping the young conqueror. However, Cyrus drove the rich king back into his capital, and in 540 took it with all its treasures.

* Isa. xli. 25, speaks of 'Cyrus as " one from the north." His kingdom was both north and east.

Apparently it was after this phenomenal victory that " II. Isaiah " comes forward with his message, for he describes Cyrus as having conquered peoples and having struck terror to kings. So rapidly and safely he passed on to victory that the prophet says he did not seem to touch the path with his feet. He assumes that his readers or hearers know all about Cyrus; he does not even trouble to name him here, although he does so later. (cf. ch. xliv. 28; xlv. 1.) You see, this young hero, he says to his fellow exiles, who do you think has given him his victories? Who has raised him up? Of course, the natural answer is that Cyrus's own god must be greater than the gods of the conquered peoples, and that he must be the one who has given victory. But the prophet does not allow this answer. It is not the god of Cyrus, nor any other than Yahweh, the God of Israel, who has given the power to this young conqueror! To be sure, Cyrus has probably never heard of Yahweh, the God of the fallen nation of Israel; at least he will have never thought of worshipping him.* But this objection the prophet does not even consider. What does it matter whether Cyrus knows it or not? The fact remains that Yahweh controls the universe and the events of history. He it is who has called the generations from the beginning. Surely, then, he must have called Cyrus.

But if Yahweh controls history and has chosen Cyrus to be a conqueror, does this not give new hope that he has chosen Israel for a great work? For how many years Israel had believed herself specially loved and chosen of Yahweh! But now faith fails. If Yahweh were indeed the one eternal God, and if he had specially chosen Israel, why did he leave her land desolate and her people in captivity? The prophet sees *why*, but does not attempt to fully explain at once. Instead,

* Note that the R.V. reading of xli. 25, is that Cyrus will yet call on Yahweh, not that he has, as according to A.V.; cf. also xlv. 4.

he first announces jubilantly that Israel still may believe in her call. Yahweh still will strengthen her; Yahweh yet shall make her a power among other nations. This announcement the prophet makes in words that have brought courage to many since his day:

Israel, Yahweh's chosen, need have no fear.

"But thou, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
Offspring of Abraham, my friend,
Thou, whom I fetched from the ends of the earth,
And called from its remotest parts,
To whom I said: My servant art thou,
I have chosen and have not rejected thee;
Fear not, for I am with thee;
Cast no look of terror, for I am thy God.
I strengthen thee; yea, I help thee;
Yea, I uphold thee with my triumphant right hand.

Israel's captors shall be confounded.

"Behold, all who were enraged at thee
Will be ashamed and confounded,
The men who contended with thee.
Will become nought and perish.

* * * * *

Yahweh will uplift the down-trodden captives.

"For I, Yahweh, thy God, hold fast thy right hand,
I who say to thee: Fear not, I help thee.
Fear not thou worm Jacob, ye puny worms of Israel;
I help thee, such is Yahweh's oracle,
And I am thy redeemer, O Israel.

Israel to become a power among the nations again.

"Behold I make of thee a new threshing sledge
Furnished with teeth;
Thou shalt thresh mountains and crush them
And shalt treat hills like chaff." (Isa. xli. 8-16.)

Thus the prophet puts side by side the two calls,

that of Cyrus and that of Israel. But what is the connection between these two ideas ? The one is to give the opportunity to the other. Cyrus is to give Israel the chance of becoming " a new threshing-sledge." Here we have, then, the prophet's interpretation of the social and political situation of his time. Probably he had long believed in the supremacy and power of Yahweh. Probably he had often wondered how he would ever make himself manifest. Waiting and hoping, at last he believed he saw *how* Yahweh would show himself. And he dared announce this belief. Cyrus should free Israel from her bondage and she should go back across the desert to her own land and there again become a nation.

Certainly this was a daring forecast, and the only thing that could have enabled him to make it was his belief in Yahweh as far above all other gods in character and in power. He draws the picture clearly. Yahweh will go with the people through the desert and open rivers or fountains as they have need, and all nations shall see and acknowledge his supremacy.

" The poor who seek water, while there is none
Whose tongue is parched with thirst,
I, Yahweh, will answer ; I, the God of Israel, will
not forsake.

The captives who are longing for help shall find it.

" On bare hills I will open rivers,
And fountains in the midst of valleys.
I will make the wilderness a brimming lake,
And dry land channels of water.

Yahweh will open fountains in the wilderness.

" I will set in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia,
The myrtle and the olive-tree ;
I will place in the desert the pine, the plane tree
And the cypress together.

The desert shall become fertile.

Men shall acknowledge the greatness of Yahweh.

"That men may see, and acknowledge,
And consider, and understand at once,
That Yahweh's hand had done this,
And Israel's Holy One has created it."

(Isa. xli. 17-20).

SECTION III.

YAHWEH'S SERVANT.

Yahweh's servant will teach the nations.

"BEHOLD my servant, whom I uphold;
My chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him,
He will set forth the law to the nations.

He will work by gentle methods.

"He will not cry aloud, nor roar as a lion,
Nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.
A cracked reed he will not break,
And a dim burning wick he will not quench.

He will be faithful till his work is accomplished.

"Faithfully he will set forth the law;
He will not burn dimly nor be crushed in spirit,
Till he have set the law in the earth,
And for his instruction the far countries wait."

(Isa. xlii. 1-4.)

This is the first of the "Servant Songs" embedded in the text of the book.* They are more compact in thought and more complete in poetic form than the other parts of the book. Also they view the servant

* The other servant-passages are: xlix. 1-6; l. 4-9; lii. 13 to liii. 12.

in a more idealistic way. It seems quite certain that they are separate and complete little poems, but it is more difficult to say when they were written or by whom. They are the most beautiful parts of the book of the II. Isaiah. They are the centre around which the prophet's ideal for Israel moves. But if he is quoting them from some one else, who can it be ? Surely if there had been another great prophet of the exilic period there would have been some other record of him. It seems, therefore, most likely that the prophet is quoting earlier writings of his own.* Perhaps in his earlier days, when he was writing and hoping that there would come a way for Israel to rise again, he embodied this idea of Israel's work. He ought to teach the nations.

Certainly this first song shows more clearly than any of the discourses in connection with the political situation, that the prophet thought of Israel as a spiritual power with a spiritual message to give the world. The spirit of Yahweh is upon the servant, and he works by noiseless spiritual methods. But his is an undaunted spirit that will go steadily, faithfully on until the teaching of Yahweh is given to far countries.

In view of this world-wide mission of Israel (read xlii. 5-7), the prophet calls upon the nations to rejoice also now that special opportunity is coming to Israel through Cyrus.

" Sing to Yahweh a new song,
And His praise from the end of the earth ;
Let the sea roar, and all that is therein,
The far countries by the sea and the inhabitants thereof.

* There are, however, many scholars who think the poems could not have been written by II. Isaiah. Some think they are from some one before his time, and some think they were put into the text after the time of II. Isaiah.

"Let the wilderness and the desert rejoice,
The villages which Kedar inhabits;
Let Sela's inhabitants exult.
From the top of their mountains let them shout amain,

"Yahweh goes forth like a hero,
Like a warrior he stirs up his rage,
He gives a cry, a piercing battle-cry,
Upon his foes he proves himself a hero."
(Isa. xlii. 10-13).

Those who feel that the servant-passages cannot have been written by the II. Isaiah point out that he does not here represent Yahweh as working by noiseless methods, nor in his descriptions of Israel's miraculous march across the desert. (Read xlii. 14-17.) It must be admitted that there is some inconsistency in the two conceptions, but absolute consistency can scarcely be expected of anyone. In his earlier days he may have thought Israel would slowly teach other nations, possibly before returning to her own land. But when Cyrus appeared, he saw a chance of a special demonstration. After Cyrus should take Babylon, Israel should by her wonderful return demonstrate Yahweh's greatness and all peoples should wonder and learn of Yahweh. The prophet certainly rejoices in this hope of a special demonstration of Yahweh's power. Perhaps he had learned by his efforts to rouse them, that the people of Israel would never rise and accomplish their mission except through some special demonstration.

Indeed, it is Israel's failure to realize her mission that is the prophet's chief concern. Here a great opportunity is coming to them, but they are not getting ready for it. He cried out to them:

"Ye deaf, hear; and ye blind, look up, that ye may see.

Who is blind but the servants* of Yahweh,
And deaf as their rulers.
Much hast thou seen, without deserving it;
Thou whose ears were open yet thou didst not hear!" (Isa. xlii. 18-20.)

Israel is blind to her mission and her possibilities.

Even though they have suffered, they seem to have learned little from it. They are even now "a people spoiled and plundered," yet this does not rouse anyone to think or plan for restoration. They go dumbly on their way, bearing whatever is put upon them without explanation or hope. (Read xlii. 21-25.) In order to rouse the latent life within them the prophet reiterates Yahweh's desire to help them and paints the picture of sons of Israel coming from the four quarters of the earth.

"And now thus says Yahweh thy Creator, O Jacob,
And thy fashioner, O Israel:
Fear not, I redeem thee; I call thee by name, mine art thou.
When thou passest through waters I will be with thee,
And rivers shall not overflow thee,
When thou goest through fire thou shalt not be scorched,
Neither shall flame burn thee.

Why should Israel not rise, since Yahweh has called her?

"For I, Yahweh, am thy God; I, Israel's Holy One, thy deliverer;
I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee,
Since thou art precious in mine eyes;
Thou art honoured, and I love thee;
I will give the far countries in thy stead,
And peoples for thy life.

If Israel rises to her mission, many lands will contribute to her life.

* The Polychrome Bible reads "servants" here, but it is not a necessary reading.

" From lands of the sunrise I bring thy offspring,
And from lands of the sunset I gather thee;
And I say to the north: Give up! And to the south: Withhold not!
Bring my sons from far and my daughters from the ends of the earth;
Everyone who is called by my name,
And whom for my glory I have formed and made."
(Isa. xliii. 1-7.)

Then from all the quarters of the earth shall come sons of Israel.

But though Israel is blind, she is Yahweh's chief witness. All these years he has led her and taught her, and now if she fails, all the lessons of the years will be lost, both to her and to the world.

" Ho, ye people with eyes, but blind,
And ye with ears, but deaf!" (Isa. xliii. 8.)

cries the prophet in the name of Yahweh,

" Ye are my witnesses, says Yahweh,
And my servants whom I have chosen,
That ye may acknowledge and believe me,
And discern that I am he who works;
Before me no god was formed,
Nor shall there be after me.
I, I am Yahweh, and beside me there is no deliverer." (Isa. xliii. 10, 11.)

SECTION IV.

YAHWEH OR MARDUK ?

"Thus says Yahweh, your redeemer, Israel's Holy One:
For your sake I have sent to Babylon." (Isa. xliii. 14.)

This is the key-note of the prophet's explanation of the career of Cyrus. It is all for Israel's sake. This would seem a narrow view, if he did not in other places clearly show that he considered Israel the servant, not the master of the world. Since Israel's mission to the world is to proclaim Yahweh, the one God, it is for her sake that Cyrus is about to conquer Israel's captors. The prophet is looking forward to the fall of Babylon. Many others, no doubt, saw that this would be the probable course of Cyrus, but II. Isaiah feels perfectly sure of it, because he sees moral reasons for it. This is the way that Israel is to have a chance to give her message. The picture of Yahweh leading Cyrus to take Babylon must have seemed a strange one:

"Thus saith Yahweh, thy redeemer,
And he who formed thee from the womb:
I am Yahweh, who wrought everything,
Who stretched forth the heavens, alone,
Who spread forth the earth—who was with me?—
Who brings to nought the omens of the impostors,
And makes the diviners of Babylon mad,
Who turns the wise backward,
And makes their knowledge folly,
Who ratifies the word of his servants,
And the prophecy of his messengers,

Yahweh is wiser than the diviners of Babylon

The rulers of Babylon can no longer keep Jerusalem desolate.

Saying of Jerusalem: Be it inhabited!
And of the temple: Be thy foundations laid!
And of the cities of Judah: Let them be built!
And the ruins of the land will I raise up;
Who says to the flood: Be dry!
And thy rivers will I parch up;

Cyrus is Yahweh's friend, since he is carrying out his purposes.

Who says of Cyrus: My friend is he,
And all my purposes will he accomplish.

Heretofore Yahweh has called Cyrus his messiah (*i.e.*, anointed).

"Thus says Yahweh to his anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped,

Yahweh himself goes before Cyrus to prepare his way.

That nations may be terror-stricken before him,
And that I may ungird the loins of kings,
To open doors before him,
And that gates may not be closed;
I myself will go before thee;
Ways will I make level;

Yahweh directly commissions Cyrus to break the gates of Babylon and take her treasures.

Doors of bronze will I break in pieces,
And bars of iron cut in sunder;
And I will give thee the treasures of darkness
And the hoards of secret places;

Yahweh calls Cyrus to these victories for the sake of Israel.

For it is I, Yahweh, who calls thee by thy name,
I, the God of Israel.
For the sake of Jacob, my servant,
And Israel, my chosen,
I called thee by thy name;

Though Cyrus does not know Yahweh, still he does his work.

I took delight in thee, though thou knowest me not.
I am, Yahweh, and there is none else;
Beside me there is no God.

The ultimate end of all these plans is the acknowledgment by all peoples of Yahweh as the one true God.

That men may acknowledge, both in the east and in the west,
That there is none beside me—
I am Yahweh, and there is none else,—
Who forms light, and createst darkness,
Who makes welfare, and createst calamity,
I, Yahweh, the true God, am the author of all this.
Shower ye heavens, from above,
And let the sky rain righteousness!

Let the earth open its womb ;
And bear the fruit of deliverance, . . .
And let it cause victory to spring up also !
I, Yahweh, have created this."
(Isaiah xliv. 24 to xlv. 8.)

These are the words used by a prophet of Israel perhaps two years before the fall of Babylon. It certainly is remarkable language. To say that Yahweh has grasped Cyrus by the right hand and is leading him to conquer Babylon, though Cyrus knew nothing about Yahweh, was daring. Especial interest is also added to the situation by the fact that in the " Cyrus Cylinder," written by some of the religious men of Babylon after the city had been taken by Cyrus, much the same language is used in attributing all Cyrus's victories to Marduk, the God of Babylon. Part of it reads as follows :

The priests in Babylon claim that it was Marduk who led Cyrus to victory.

" Marduk . . . appointed also a prince who shall guide aright the wish of the heart which his hand upholds, even Cyrus, the king of the city of Ansan ; he has proclaimed this title ; for the sovereignty of all the world does he commemorate his name. . . . Marduk, the great lord, the restorer of his people, beheld with joy the deeds of his vicegerent, who was righteous in hand and heart. To his city of Babylon he summoned his march ; he bade him also take the road to Babylon ; like a friend and comrade he went at his side. The weapons of his vast army, whose number, like the waters of a river, could not be known, were marshalled in order, and it spread itself at his side. Without fighting and battle (Marduk) caused him to enter into Babylon ; his city of Babylon he spared ; in a hiding-place Nabonidas the king, who revered him not, did he give into his hand."

Who, then, did lead Cyrus, Marduk or Yahweh ? What god Cyrus himself worshipped before taking Babylon there is no means of knowing, but he seems to have pursued the policy of letting each god reign

in its own territory. King Nabonidas had displeased the priests of Marduk, but Cyrus took care to follow their advice and worship according to the old forms, and they, therefore, said that it must have been Marduk who had given Cyrus his victories. Probably they were just as sincere as II. Isaiah was, in claiming that Yahweh would give Babylon to Cyrus for the sake of Israel. Who, then, was right—the prophet of Israel or the priests of Babylon? The answer, of course, is not difficult to find. At the time both were right in seeing that the events of history are under the direction of and according to the laws of a Power above, and it was necessary for each to use the name for the Supreme Power that had been handed down to them from antiquity; and both were wrong in thinking that Power above need necessarily be connected with any name. However, there are two points in which the prophet of Israel was far nearer the truth than the priests of Babylon. First, he certainly thought of one supreme power far more completely than the priests of Babylon. They said, Marduk is supreme lord, he created the world; but they did not actually think of his influencing people who did not worship him, even though some did say that Marduk was the only god and that other gods were only manifestations of him. But the prophet of Israel could not admit the existence of other gods, and actually believed that the one God whom his fathers had named Yahweh controlled all peoples. Second, he attributed to Yahweh more of the spiritual qualities which must belong to the Supreme One, than the priests of Babylon did. To be sure, the "Cyrus Cylinder" says that Cyrus was "righteous in hand and heart," but the Babylonian religion did not lay any emphasis upon righteousness nor any other spiritual quality. But II. Isaiah followed the prophets before him in making absolute righteousness an attribute of Yahweh, and to this he added other spiritual qualities which could belong only to the Supreme Being. The religion of

Marduk has passed out of existence, while the religion of Yahweh still influences many people. This is due to the spiritual qualities which the latter contained, attributed to it by Isaiah and men of like spirit. Time, therefore, has shown that, in general, the prophet was right when he declared in the name of Yahweh :

" So it was I who roused him [Cyrus] in righteousness,
And all his ways will I make level ;
He will build my city,
And my exiled ones will he set free." (Isa, xlv. 13.)

The time shall come, therefore, when various peoples will come to Israel saying :

" Only in thee is God, and beside there is none,
No god-head at all ;
Truly with thee God hides himself,
The God of Israel is a deliverer ! " (xlv. 14.)

Yahweh's claim will, in time, be allowed when he says :

" Is it not I, Yahweh ? and there is no God beside me,
A God who speaks truth and delivers, there is not beside me,
Turn to me and receive deliverance, all ye ends of the earth,
For I am God, and there is none else.
By myself have I sworn,
A true word has gone out of my mouth,
A word that shall not be recalled,
That to me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." (Isa. xlv. 21-23.) (Read the rest of ch. xlv.)

SECTION X.

THE PURPOSE OF THE EXILE.

From the earliest time the servant has been in the thought of Yahweh.

" Hearken ye far countries, to me,
And listen ye distant peoples.
Yahweh has called me from the womb,
From my mother's lap has he celebrated my name ;
He made my mouth like a sharp sword,
In the shadow of his hand he hid me ;
He made me a polished shaft,
In his quiver he stored me.

When the purpose for which the servant labours seems lost, Yahweh gives strength.

" He said to me : Thou art my servant,
In whom I will glorify myself,
And I was honoured in the eyes of Yahweh,
And my God became my strength ;
And as for me, I said, I have laboured in vain ;
To no purpose and for nothing have I spent my strength ;
Nevertheless my right is with Yahweh,
And my recompense with my God.

" And now Yahweh says,—He who formed me from the womb
To be a servant to him,
That I might bring Jacob back to him,
That Israel might be gathered :—
It is too light a thing to raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved of Israel ;
So I set thee as a light of the nations.
That my deliverance may be to the end of the earth." (Isa. xlix. 1-6.)

The purpose of the servant is not merely to raise up Israel, but to take light to the Gentiles.

In this second of the servant-songs the servant himself speaks. The first song dealt chiefly with the

method of his work, but here the purpose is more clearly stated, together with the difficulties in attaining it. From earliest times Yahweh has been planning to make the servant a powerful instrument—" a polished shaft "—with which he can effect a great purpose. The servant himself is conscious of this purpose, and sometimes feels that it is still so far from its realization that perhaps he has laboured in vain. But such thoughts are banished by the strengthening presence of Yahweh, who sets the goal still more clearly before the servant, saying that he shall yet not only restore Israel, but bring deliverance to other peoples.

This poem seems used by the prophet as a text for the basis of a discourse. He refers to the servant as one who is " deeply despised, abhorred of the people, a servant of tyrants " (xlix. 7), but indicates that the day of his exaltation is drawing near.

" Thus says Yahweh :
In a time of favour do I answer thee
And in a day of deliverance I help thee,"

After further description of the coming deliverance, he breaks (xlix. 8-12) into a shout of joy :

" Ring with shouts of joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth !
Let the mountains break forth into shouts of joy !
For Yahweh comforts his people,
And has compassion on his afflicted ones."
(xlix. 13.)

Time of exultation at hand.

Here " his afflicted ones " seems to mean the same as the despised servant (xlix. 7), and this perhaps suggests the answer to the question which must continually arise as one reads—Who is the servant ? The most natural answer is that the servant is Israel personified, but it is evident that this answer must

Who is the servant ?

be modified somewhat, since the servant is said to "raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the preserved of Israel." Can Israel raise up Israel? The prophet seems, indeed, to say this, unless the servant could be some individual. But there could have been no individual who could answer to the description of the servant—one who had passed through much preparation and suffering in order to raise up Israel and take the knowledge of Yahweh to the Gentiles. The work of the servant is too large for any individual. May it not be possible, then, that the servant is thought of as the personification of the faithful in Israel or ideal Israel? Then the history of the servant began with the history of Israel, the time of discouragement through which he passed was the exile, and the coming exaltation was the looked-for deliverance. It is the work of the servant to raise the unfaithful up to the standard of righteousness and power set by Yahweh. Those who represent the ideal Israel have passed through suffering in order that the life of the real Israel may be brought up to the ideal standard, and that then, light might go out to the Gentiles. The next servant passage lays still more emphasis upon the suffering which has taught the servant how to strengthen the weak ones.

The ideal Israel.

The ideal servant is never rebellious, but always hears the words of Yahweh and imparts them to others.

"The Lord Yahweh, has given me the eloquence of his disciples,
That I may know how to revive the weary ones with words of comfort;
In the morning he wakens mine ear that I may hearken as his disciple,
And I have not been rebellious; I have not turned back.

"My back I gave to smiters, and my cheeks to those who plucked out the beard,
My face I hid not from insult and spitting.

But the Lord Yahweh will help me; therefore I
I am not confounded;
Therefore I hardened my face like flint, and was
sure that I should not be ashamed.

The servant has suffered acutely, but never been confounded by any circumstances.

"Near is he that redresses my wrongs; who will
contend with me? Let us stand forth together!
Who is my opponent? Let him draw near to me!
Behold the Lord, Yahweh, will help me: Who is he
that can worst me?
Behold they will fall to pieces like a garment; the
moths will eat them." (Isa. l. 4-9.)

Nothing but victory can await the servant, for his cause is Yahweh's.

If this interpretation of the servant is right, then it contains the prophet's explanation of the Exile. It has been for the perfecting of the servant. It was not merely for the giving of a due reward for sins, as Ezekiel said, but it was for the purpose of giving Israel a new idea—that of service. The Exile turned Israel out from the narrowness of her own little land into problems of the larger world. Then, those who had learned to know the inner character of Yahweh as the great prophets had proclaimed him, found that they had a treasure of which the great Babylonian world knew nothing. It grew clearer that all the world would be glad to know of Yahweh, who spoke in men's hearts and made them pure. It grew clearer that Yahweh must love the whole world as well as Israel. All the romance of their early history, the deliverance from Egypt, the victories in Canaan, the formation of the kingdom had taught them to know the spiritual character of Yahweh, but this knowledge was not for Israel alone—this light must be taken also to the Gentiles. Israel must be Yahweh's servant to take this message. It was necessary for Israel to suffer the Exile in order to learn this. Only a part of the actual Israel in exile as yet understood, but those who did, set their faces like flint, enduring the suffering for the sake of the high purpose of carrying light to the larger

Service personified.

world. The personification of this ideal of service was a powerful way of making it appeal to each individual.

SECTION VI.

AWAKE! AWAKE!

If Israel is the servant of Yahweh, and her service for him is to extend to the whole world, then the important thing is to get Israel to be conscious of her work and be ready to take every opportunity to do it. To rouse Israel to the consciousness of her mission was the chief concern of "the great prophet of the exile." As I. Isaiah held before the people of his time the picture of a holy Jerusalem and tried to persuade them to make themselves a part of the "Remnant" who would become the founders of the Holy City, so II. Isaiah held before the people of his time the picture of an ideal Israel, who would live in the light of Yahweh, and as his servant carry light to the world; and he urged the exiled, discouraged Israelites about him to lift up their heads and become the light-bearing servant.

Let the discouraged remember how Yahweh called and blessed Abraham.

"Hearken to me, ye who pursue righteousness,
who seek Yahweh!
Look to the rock whence ye were hewn
—And to the quarry whence ye were digged!
Look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah who
bore you!
He was alone when I called him,

And I blessed him and increased him.
So Yahweh comforts Zion, he comforts all her ruins,
And makes her desert like Yahweh's garden,
And her wilderness like Eden;
Joy and gladness will be found in her,
Thanksgiving and the voice of song,
Attend to me, my people, yea, to me give ear,
For from me will instruction go forth,
And my law as a light of the nations,
Suddenly will I bring near my redress,
Suddenly will my delivery go forth;
Mine arms will judge the peoples,
For me do the far countries wait.

Even so will Yahweh turn Israel's wilderness into a garden.

When Israel understands the joy of the teaching of Yahweh, she will be a light to the nations.

" Lift up your eyes to heaven, and look on the earth beneath;
For the heavens will be fretted to dust as by the moth,
And the earth like a garment,
The world will fall to pieces,
And the dwellers therein will die like gnats;
But my deliverance will be forever,
And my righteousness will not come to an end.

Though heaven and earth pass away, the righteousness of Yahweh and its final triumph is sure.

" Hearken to me, ye that know righteousness,
The people in whose heart is my teaching,
Fear not the insults of frail men,
And be not dismayed at their revilings!
For like a garment the moths will eat them;
And like wool, the worms;
But my redress will last forever,
And my deliverance age after age.

How can those who have Yahweh's teaching in their hearts fear?

" Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Yahweh!
Awake, as in the days of yore, the ages of far-off antiquity!
Was it not thou who did'st shatter Rahab,
Who didst deal despitefully with the dragon?
Was it not thou who didst dry up the sea,

In antiquity Yahweh conquered the powers of darkness. Will he not still?

The waters of the great ocean?
Who didst make the depths of the sea
A way for the redeemed to pass over?

Yahweh, Creator of the heavens and the earth, comforts Israel.

"I, I am he who comforts thee,
Whom dreadest thou, that thou art afraid
Of frail man who dies, and of a son of the earth-born,
Who is destroyed like grass?
And forgettest Yahweh, thy maker, who has stretched out the heavens,
And spread out firmly the earth?
And tremblest continually all the day
For the fury of the oppressor." (Isa li. 1-13.)

One great thing about II. Isaiah is his sympathy. In his desire to rouse Israel to a higher view of Yahweh and of her own work, he never descends to mere upbraiding. He himself is an exile; he has experienced the "fury of the oppressor," and knows how natural are the trembling and fear. But he knows also that if one will but lift one's eyes to heaven, one can find there confidence that will overcome the darkness of such circumstances, for one can see Yahweh and the possibility of working out his purposes with him even through suffering.

Let us have courage! cries the prophet to his comrades in suffering. Think of how Yahweh conquered evil in the old time; think of how he chose Abraham and led his descendants; see how he is leading Cyrus now, why need we fear? Is this not all for a purpose? Even that we may enter into Yahweh's purpose of giving light to the whole world?

The note of comfort and joy with which the book begins is not, then, a mere beginning note, but the chief *motif*. It is not the wrath, but the love of God that II. Isaiah preaches. Their sins have been sufficiently punished (xl. 2); Yahweh freely forgives (xliii. 25). Yahweh's love for Israel is greater than a mother's tenderness for her child.

"But Zion said: Yahweh has forsaken me,
And my Lord has forgotten me!—
Can a woman so forget her suckling,
As not to have compassion on the son of her womb?
Should ever these forget, yet will not I forget thee!"

(xlix. 14, 15.)

Yahweh is more faithful to Israel than a mother to her child.

Appealing thus to the motive of gratitude and love, the prophet expects faithfulness to Yahweh's work to follow naturally and out of this joy and peace.

"Thus says Yahweh, thy redeemer, Israel's Holy One,
I, Yahweh, am thy God, who teaches thee to do what is indeed profitable.
Who leads thee in the way that thou shouldst go.
Oh, that thou wouldst hearken to my commands!
Then would peace abound like a river,
And thy prosperity like the waves of the sea."

(Isa. xlviii. 17, 18.)

Yahweh's way brings peace.

The prophet often tries directly to stir up more enthusiasm, or rather to impart directly the enthusiasm which he himself feels.

"Rouse thee! rouse thee! Stand up, O Jerusalem,
Who hast drunken at Yahweh's hand the cup of his fury!
The goblet of bewilderment thou hast drunken and drained.
A double woe befell thee; who can fitly condole with thee?
Storming and destruction, famine and sword; who can comfort thee?
Thy sons lie fainting as an antelope in a net,
So full are they of the fury of Yahweh, of the rebuke of thy God.

Israel has drunk sufficient of the cup of Yahweh's fury.

Yahweh will press the cup of his fury to the mouth of Israel's persecutors.

"Therefore now hear this, thou afflicted one, and drunken, but not with wine,
Thus says Yahweh thy God, who befriends the cause of his people,
Behold, I take out of thy hand the cup of bewilderment;
The goblet of my fury—thou shalt not drink it again;
And I put it into the hands of those who oppressed, and of those who afflicted thee,
Who have said to thee: Bow down, that we may pass over!
So thou madest thy back the ground, a street for wayfarers." (Isa. li. 17-23).

One can scarcely help feeling surprise to come upon a passage like this, where the prophet is arousing enthusiasm by assurance of the punishment of one's enemies. Especially does this seem surprising when so much has been said about carrying light to the Gentile world. Can the cup of fury and light be taken to the same people? It would not be inconsistent according to the prophet's thought for one to precede the other. Israel herself had to suffer for her sin and her ignorance before she learned the truths she was to take to the world. Still it cannot be denied that the prophet seems to rejoice in the punishment coming upon Israel's enemies. One can only say that the wonder is that in that age he should not have laid the emphasis on punishment more than he did. He certainly is much more occupied with Israel's mission of light to her enemies. It is because of this mission that Israel is to make herself pure. In the course of the carrying out of her mission there will come to Israel great things. (Read lii. 7-9.) Indeed, the restoration to her own land must have seemed so great a thing to Israel that one wonders whether the people would not be far more interested in that, than any mission to the Gentiles.

At least in the prophet's mind the return to Jerusalem is of secondary importance. His holy arm will Yahweh make bare in order that all the ends of the earth may see Yahweh's power and come to know him. (lii. 10.) Hence, the prophet wishes Israel to purify herself that she may be a revelation of Yahweh.

" Awake ! Awake ! put on thy strength, O Zion !
Put on thy splendid garments, O Jerusalem, holy city !
No more shall enter into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean,
Shake from thyself the dust, and arise, O captive Jerusalem !
Loose thyself from the bonds of thy neck, O captive maiden, Zion." (Isa. lii. 1, 2.)

SECTION VII.

THE SUFFERING SERVANT.

lii. 13 Verily, my servant will deal wisely,
He will rise, be exalted, and be very high,
As on his account many were appalled,
So will many in him take delight.

The servant shall be exalted.

14. " Deeply marred was his appearance, out of all human likeness,
And his form out of semblance to sons of man,
15. But as deep will be the obeisance of many,
Before him kings will be awe-struck in silence ;

As deep as his humiliation will be the obeisance of many.

His exaltation seems too wonderful to believe.

15. "For that which had not been told them, do they see,
And that which they had not heard, do they perceive.

liii. 1. "Who, indeed, can yet believe our revelation?
And the arm of Yahweh—to whom has it disclosed itself?

His youth had no beauty.

2. "He grew up as a sapling before us,
And as a sprout from a root in dry ground,
He had no form nor majesty,
And no beauty that we should delight in him.

In his manhood he was despised.

3. "Despised was he and forsaken of men,
A man of many pains, and familiar with sickness,
Yea, like one from whom men hide the face,
Despised, and we esteemed him not.

It was because he was bearing our sins.

4. "But our sicknesses, alone, he bore,
And our pains—he carried them;
Whilst we esteemed him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.

Alone he was humiliated to bring us healing.

5. "But alone he was humiliated because of our rebellions,
Alone he was crushed because of our iniquities;
A chastisement, all for our peace, was upon him,
And to us came healing through his stripes.

Since we had gone astray he suffered.

6. "All we, like sheep, had gone astray,
We had turned, everyone to his own way,
While Yahweh made to light upon him
The guilt of us all.

7. " He was treated with rigour, but he resigned himself,
And opened not his mouth,
Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
And like a sheep that before her shearers is dumb.

Meekly he bore harsh treatment

8. " Through an oppressive doom was he taken away,
And as for his fate, who thought thereon,
That he was cut off out of the land of the living,
That for my people's* rebellion he had been stricken to death ?

Finally he was stricken to death.

9. " And his grave was appointed with the rebellious,
And with the wicked his tomb,
Although he had done no injustice,
Nor was any deceit in his mouth.

The sinless servant was buried with the wicked.

10. " But it pleased Yahweh to crush and humiliate him.
If he were to make himself an offering for guilt,
He would see a posterity, he would prolong his days,
And the pleasure of Yahweh would prosper in his hands.

Yahweh thus crushed him that he might have fuller life.

11. . . . . .
. . . . .
He would deliver from anguish his soul,
Would cause him to see light to the full,

* To read, " the peoples," instead of " my peoples," requires slight change of text.

The darkness was for the purpose of revealing light.

12. " With knowledge thereof my servant will
interpose for many,
And take up the load of their iniquities.
Therefore shall he receive a possession
among the great,
And with the strong shall he divide spoil.

With this new knowledge, he will help many and be himself exalted.

" Forasmuch as he poured out his life-blood,
And let himself be reckoned with the
rebellious,

Through suffering, life and power were won for many.

While it was he who had borne the sin of
many,
And for the rebellious had interposed."

One cannot approach this final picture of the servant except with feelings of awe, both because of the profound explanation of suffering which it contains, and because it seems such a marvellous expression of the spirit of the life of Jesus. However, it will help to the truest appreciation of the poem if one puts aside, for the moment, its present-day significance, and asks what it meant to II. Isaiah and the people of his day.

Up to this point in the book the servant has been Israel ideally considered. Can this explanation be extended through this last servant passage? Many have felt that it cannot because the personification seems so complete that an actual person must be meant. Various persons of the time have been suggested, but probably more scholars think it may be a description of Jeremiah than anyone else. Certainly Jeremiah's faithful service in the midst of many hardships constituted him a servant of Yahweh, and his death may have been that of a martyr. But the servant in the poem not only dies but comes to life again, or, at least, is considerered as still living (10), after having been buried (9). His largest, truest life comes after and because of his death (10-12). The only sense in which this could be said of Jeremiah

or anyone of the time is that his words and deeds lived after him. But the servant is pictured as actually living, seeing posterity, prolonging his days, receiving a possession among the great. This, surely, can apply to no individual, and other parts of the description are difficult to think of as applying to any individual of the time, as, for instance, " Yahweh made to light on him the guilt of us all " (6), " he had done no injustice, nor was any deceit in his mouth " (9), " before him kings will be awe-struck in silence." (lii. 15.)

Moreover, one ought to find an interpretation of the servant that would apply to all the servant songs. There is no reason for expecting a different meaning in the last one. And will not the interpretation given in the earlier ones apply here ? Then it would be ideal Israel, whose beginning was humble and without beauty (2) ; who was despised and rejected of men (3), but who had done no injustice (7) ; who was " cut off " in the exile (8) and buried among the wicked of Babylon (9), but who comes to life again, by the return to Jerusalem (10, 12), and there receives the " obeisance of many " (lii. 15). The chief difficulty in this interpretation is the explanation of the speakers represented by " us " and " our " and " we." Before whom did he grow up as a root in dry ground (2) ? Whose sickness and pains did he bear (4, 5) ? Who had gone astray like sheep ? It must be the Gentile world, if Israel is the servant. But many feel that the idea of the outside world coming to acknowledge that Israel had suffered on their account is quite too large to be accredited to the prophet. But is not this exactly the idea that underlies all his work ? Israel is to bring the world to know Yahweh, he has said many times. Here he simply intensifies the idea by putting into the mouth of the nations, " All we, like sheep, had gone astray." It is just at this point that II. Isaiah rises far above all who had gone before him and many

who came after him. Israel's whole history, he said, is for the purpose of discovering truth and giving it to the world, and, naturally, the time must come when the world will acknowledge that they have received truth and that Israel has passed through many sufferings and death because of their iniquities. Indeed, the subject of this poem is not the suffering of the servant, but the exaltation of the servant. It explains past sufferings as preparing for future exaltation, and this exaltation is the taking to the world of the truth about the One God.*

The statement of the meaning of this great passage to the people of its day gives the key to its present-day interpretation. Before Jesus had lived, this had not been considered a messianic passage. There are no certain references in pre-Christian literature to the idea of a suffering Messiah. But after Jesus had suffered people began to feel that he was the kind of servant pictured here. Philip (Acts viii. 32-34) uses a part of the description to preach Jesus. Of course this does not mean that II. Isaiah meant to describe Jesus. It would not have helped the exiles in Babylon to be told that five hundred years later Jesus would suffer because he brought new truth to Israel. Indeed, the suffering described is all past, not future. It is therefore wrong to try to find in the passage a foretelling of the details of Jesus's life. But it is right to see that Jesus lived the spirit of the servant songs completely. No doubt he was familiar with them and saw that they represented the true spirit of Israelitish life. He accepted and lived II. Isaiah's teaching that suffering is worth while, if it leads to the spreading of the light of truth. Israel suffered for the sake of giving to the world the knowledge of Yahweh; Jesus suffered for the sake of giving to the world the vision of the Kingdom of God.

* No doubt that part of Israel which is untrue to Yahweh and has not risen to the idea of its mission, is classed along with the Gentile world. Cf. xlix. 6, where the two are put together.

SECTION VIII.

HO! YE THIRSTY.

Let desolate Israel prepare for growth.

" Triumph, O thou barren, who hast not borne!
Break into cries of triumph, O thou who hast not travailed!
More are the children of the desolate than the children of her who is married, says Yahweh.
Widen the space of thy tent, and the curtains stretch forth abundantly;
Lengthen thy cords, and fasten well thy tent-pins.

Her desolate exile shall pass away.

" . . . for right and left wilt thou spread forth,
And thy posterity will possess nations, and will people desolate cities,
Fear not, for thou wilt not be ashamed;
Be not confounded, for thou wilt not be put to the blush;
Thou wilt forget the shame of thy youth,
And the reproach of thy widowhood thou wilt no more remember.

Can Yahweh forget those whom in youth he chose?

" Thy husband is thy Maker, Yahweh Sabaoth is his name,
Thy redeemer is Israel's Holy One, God of the whole earth is he called.
As a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit has he called thee;
And one who has been wedded in youth,
Can she be rejected? says Yahweh thy God.

His seeming forgetfulness was only for a moment.

" For a little moment did I forsake thee,
But with great compassion will I gather thee;

In wrath I hid my face from thee,
But with everlasting kindness I have compassion on thee,
Says thy redeemer, Yahweh.

As Yahweh's promise to Noah so is his oath to Israel.

"Like the days of Noah is this crisis to me;
As I swore that Noah's waters
Should no more pass over the earth,
So do I swear that I will not be wroth with thee,
Nor rebuke thee.

Yahweh's kindness is more firmly based than mountains.

"Though mountains should move and hills should totter,
Yet from thee my kindness will not move,
Nor will my covenant of peace totter,
Says Yahweh who has compassion on thee.

He will make Jerusalem beautiful.

"Thou afflicted one, storm-tossed, unconsoled!
Behold I will set thy bases in rubies,
And will found thee with sapphires;
I will make thy battlements of jasper,
Thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy border of jewels;

And her builders must be righteous disciples.

"All they that build thee will be Yahweh's disciples,
And great will be the prosperity of thy children;
Through righteousness wilt thou be established."
(Isa. liv. 1-14.)

This song of triumph follows appropriately upon the last servant passage, in which Israel is seen struggling upward through all her difficulties to the light of Yahweh's spiritual character, and taking upon herself the mission of diffusing this to the world. Her barren period of exile is almost over. She must be prepared to widen the space of her tent in order to admit into her family many who have not been part of Israel. This has been Yahweh's purpose all along; his kindness underlies all Israel's history and is more

certain than the solid mountains ; it will bring about a beautified Jerusalem in which all people shall be Yahweh's disciples.

But why should Jerusalem be again rebuilt, and why should Yahweh be recognized by the outside world ? Is it not a blot upon the II. Isaiah's work that he always puts together the spreading of truth and the supremacy of Israel ? Was not Amos greater, who said that Israel must be swept away in order that justice might rule ? Certainly if the supremacy of Israel is that of privilege merely, it casts a shadow on the prophet's revelation of God. But his chief greatness is that although he rejoices in the liberation and exaltation of Israel, which he sees is near at hand, he declares that Israel's is a supremacy of service, not of privilege. Jersualem is to be beautified only because it contains the beauty of truth for the world. Indeed, Israel has suffered to win this truth while other peoples have lived careless lives. Israel's only special privilege is that of suffering—of being the servant of Yahweh. This conception of things constitutes II. Isaiah the first true monotheist. No other prophet had seen that Yahweh's purposes included all the world—that Yahweh actually cared for all people and had chosen Israel only to help take light to all nations. Although keeping the Hebrew name Yahweh, this prophet of the exile, then, thinks of the God of all peoples and invites all to come and partake of the waters of life freely.

" Ho ! all ye thirsty ones, come to the waters !
And ye who have no bread, eat !
Yea, come buy grain without money,
And wine and milk without payment,
Why should ye spent money for that which is not bread
And your earnings for that which cannot satisfy ?
Hearken to me, and ye shall eat that which is good,
And delight yourselves in delicacies.

Let the thirsty nations come and partake of the food and drink which Israel has bought for them.

Israel has received all her privileges for the sake of the nations to whom she can give them.

" I will give you an everlasting covenant,
The sure promises of loving kindnesses to David;
Truly as a witness to the peoples did I give him
A ruler and commander of the nations,
Truly thou, too, wilt call people whom thou knowest not,
People who know thee not will run to thee,
Because of Yahweh thy God, and for Israel's Holy One,
Since he has glorified thee.

Seek Yahweh now while there is a special revelation of him.

" Seek ye Yahweh, now that He may be found;
Call ye upon him, now that he is near!
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways my ways, says Yahweh.
As the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are my ways higher than your ways,
And my thoughts than your thoughts.

" As the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven,
And thither returns not, except it have watered the earth;
And have made it bring forth and sprout,
And given seed to the sower, and bread to the eater;

Yahweh's purpose is working itself out in the world as surely as th processes of nature.

" So will my word be that hath gone forth out of my mouth;
It will not return to me void,
Except it have accomplished that which I pleased,
And carried out that for which I sent it.

" For with joy shall ye go forth,
And in peace shall ye be led;
The mountains and hills shall break forth before you into exaltation,
And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

" Instead of the thorn-bush shall come up the fir-tree,

And instead of the nettle shall come up the myrtle tree;
And it will be to Yahweh a memorial,
An everlasting sign which cannot be cut off."
(Isa. lv. 1-13.)

This purpose will produce peace and joy.

Here ends the writing of II. Isaiah. At least what immediately follows deals with the circumstances in Jerusalem some years after the exile period, and it is doubtful whether any of the material in the rest of the Book of Isaiah belongs to the exilic period. One would like to know more about the result of the II. Isaiah's work. Did he help arrange for the return to Jerusalem when two years later Cyrus set the people free? There is no answer to this question, and it is hard to know how many people went back. Those who did found great difficulties in cultivating the land and building the temple, as the sermons of Haggai and Zechariah show. But, worse still, it was the teacher of the type of Ezekiel rather than II. Isaiah who controlled things, and Israel, instead of considering herself a light bearer to the world, began shutting herself off from all contact with the world for fear of contamination. Only one voice was raised against this deadly narrowness—that of the Prophet Jonah. The ideal of the servant of Yahweh was forgotten until it was brought to light by the life of Jesus, who revealed God the Father and all men as fellow-servants.

HEBREW PROPHETISM.

Those prophets that have been studied in this series of lessons constitute the group who have given its distinctive significance to Hebrew Prophetism. The prophets who lived before the time of Amos were much like the prophets of other peoples, using various sorts of divining instruments to find out unknown things. The Hebrews seem to have used a divining instrument which they called an ephod. The "Schools of the Prophets" induced a frenzy. (Read 1 Sam. xxiii. 6-13.) It was generally expected that a prophet would be paid for his services. (Read 1 Sam. ix. 7-9.) It is possible that Elijah and Elisha introduced some new element into Hebrew prophecy, but it is difficult to form an estimate of their work, since they left no writings.

Immediately after II. Isaiah, prophetism concerned itself so much with the making of the ritual of the new temple and the details of the law that it can almost be said to have passed over into priesthood. In the three or four centuries preceding the time of Christ, prophetic writings became almost entirely apocalyptic. This curious kind of writing pictured the past and forecast the future in most extravagant figures, and, what is more serious, it held forth extravagant hopes of sudden miraculous deliverance from all woes and almost lost sight of moral considerations. From Amos to II. Isaiah, then, one should

study in order to form an estimate of the real contribution of Hebrew Prophetism.

What, then, did the prophets do for Hebrew religion. Scarcely less than create it! The old Hebrew religion was similar in almost every feature with that of the other Semitic tribes, but when Amos declared, "No prophet am I, nor a prophet's son; but a herdsman am I and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: and Yahweh took me as I followed the flock and Yahweh said unto me, Go prophesy unto my people Israel" (Amos vii. 14, 15), he opened a new epoch in the history of religion. With that saying the old prophetism began to lose its place in Israel, and a new type of prophet, to whom God spoke directly, became the ideal. It became the ideal not only for a class of prophets, but for all true followers of Yahweh.

This sort of an ideal once conceived in the midst of the life of a nation, must work out its consequences. If God "declareth unto man what is his thought" (Amos iii. 13), then man's thought and character must begin to become like God's. This would compel all earnest souls to seek an answer to the question, What is the character of God? Amos declared that it was absolute justice which must work out its consequence as surely as the laws of Nature. (Amos iii. 1-11.)

Hosea said, God is not only just in bringing the results of sin to their issue, but he loves the one upon whom the dire results fall. He is like a parent teaching his children to walk, tenderly taking them by the arms, hoping they will walk in paths that will not bring punishment, caring most that they may return his love (Hos. xi. 1-4 and vi. 6).

Isaiah blended the ideas of justice and love and called it holiness.

"Holy, holy, holy is Yahweh of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. vi. 3).

He applied this ideal to the whole of the people, declaring that the city of Jerusalem must be purged until every citizen enrolled within it, should be called

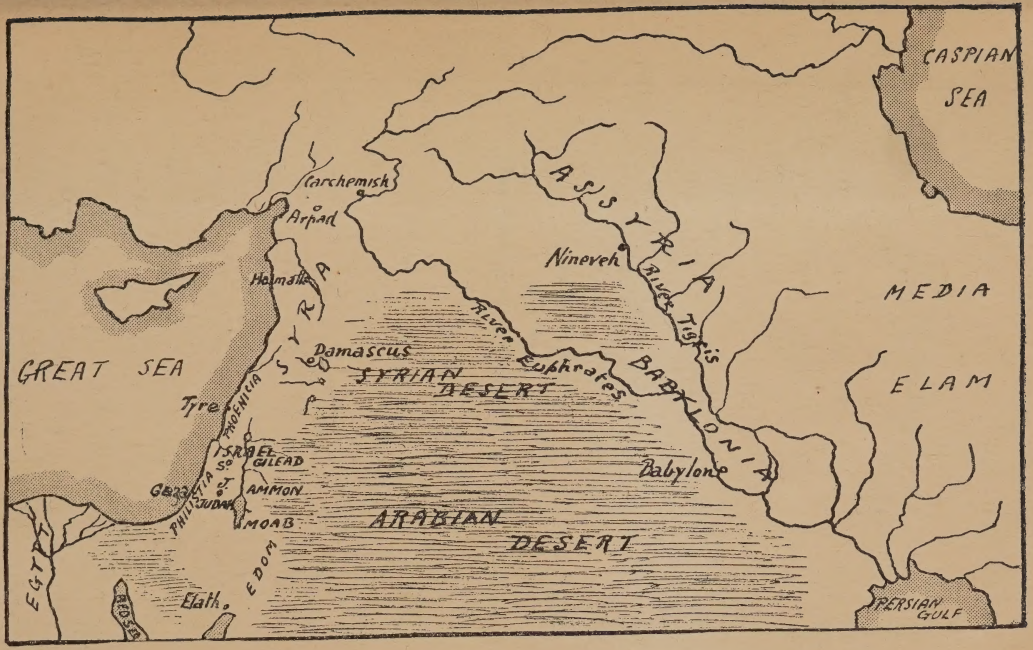
holy. (Isa. iv. 3.) He showed the practicability of this ideal in a way that could never be forgotten.

Jeremiah said Yahweh is the living source of life. (Jer. ii. 13.) He will sweep away his city and temple that men may depend upon nothing but their spiritual relationship to him. (Jer. vii. 1-15.) Yahweh's word is like a fire in the soul (Jer. xxiii. 29), and he will be satisfied with nothing less than the burning of this word in every individual soul. (Jer. xxiv. 7.) Ezekiel stated the other side of this teaching, saying that each individual was responsible for his own sins. (Ez. xviii. 20.)

II. Isaiah said, Yahweh rules and demands justice not only of Israel, but of all people; he cares not only for Israel, but for all people, and has long been working out purposes of love for them. He has entered into the sufferings of Israel, as they have learned by sad experience the things that do not constitute righteousness and through sorrow have come to see the spiritual character of religion. Yahweh comforts Israel; he has long been planning the revelation of himself to the whole world. Even as Yahweh loves and leads people, he expects them to love and serve him and each other. Israel is to be a servant to the world, and the world is to contribute to the upbuilding of Israel. In this ideal of mutual service and mutual dependence upon a supreme being of Love, the highest point in the development of the Hebrew religion is reached. Indeed, just at this point it ceases to be essentially Hebrew, and becomes a world religion—the true monotheism. The Hebrew Yahweh passes over into the God whose spirit broods over all the world.

To be sure, the mass of the people did not rise to this conception of God, and even the leaders who, a few years later interested themselves in the rebuilding of Jerusalem, did not act at all on the principle that Israel is a servant to carry light to the world and that Yahweh is the God of the whole world. They begin the process of separating themselves from all who

are not of Jewish blood. Indeed, the ideal of II. Isaiah does not live again on the earth until it is embodied in Jesus' teaching concerning the kingdom of heaven. There are references to it in later writers. Indeed, one writer has produced a passage breathing in part the same spirit as the servant songs of II. Isaiah, but it soon passes over into the narrower idea that Israel is to be served by other peoples, rather than herself serve. (Read Isa. lxi. 1-6.) This passage is of special interest too, because Jesus quotes it at Nazareth (Luke iv. 18, 19), and refers to it in his answer to John the Baptist (Luke vii. 22); but he quotes only the beginning, stopping before the narrower conception is expressed. This is exactly what Jesus did for the Hebrew religion; he gathered its eternal elements and on them laid the foundations of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus is, therefore, in a true and deep sense the fulfilment of the prophets. Not that they foretold him, but they opened the road that led to him. Hebrew prophetism found its goal in the kingdom of heaven.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